

**AUGUST**  
**2 0 1 5**  
ISSUE 637  
£ 4 . 5 0



## DRIVEN: NEW R8

AUDI'S MASTERPIECE IS BACK –  
FASTER, LEANER, HARDER...BETTER?

USED vs NEW

**V8 M3**  
**for £23k**  
**or new**  
**GT86?**

# Aston's 200mph rebirth

EXCLUSIVE

Flat-out in  
800bhp Vulcan

**THE PLAN** Turn  
money pit Aston  
into a supercar  
superpower

GIANT TEST

**Volvo plays  
its ace**

Can XC90 trump X5  
and Range Sport?

INSIDE

**Porsche's  
Le Mans  
garage**

Spending the night  
with Mark Webber  
and 25 mechanics!

EXCLUSIVE

**We drive  
secret  
Lambo**

Hybrid V10,  
900bhp, silent?







Official fuel consumption figures for the all-new Audi RS 3 Sportback in mpg (l/100km) from: Urban 24.8 (11.4) – 25.2 (11.2), for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Optional wheels may affect emissions and fuel consumption



A red Audi RS 3 Sportback is shown from the front, positioned in a dark tunnel. The car's headlights are on, and its license plate reads 'B71 TCC'. It features 'RS3' and 'quattro' badges on the front grille. The car is being pulled by a cable system that extends into the distance, suggesting a performance test or a dynamic driving scenario. The tunnel's curved walls and ceiling are illuminated by a series of lights, creating a sense of depth and motion.

**Audi Sport**

**The all-new  
Audi RS 3 Sportback.  
Born restless.**

See what happens when you unleash  
an RS 3 Sportback. Search RS3.

Extra Urban 43.5 (6.5) – 44.8 (6.3), Combined 34.0 (8.3) – 34.9 (8.1), CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 194 – 189g/km. Standard EU test figures  
figures. Image for illustrative purposes only, includes optional extras.



# NEW PEUGEOT 208 RE-ENERGISED



**New Peugeot 208 Allure with introductory offer:\***  
Active City Brake | Satellite Navigation | Reversing Camera

**PureTech**

PEUGEOT RECOMMENDS **TOTAL**

Official Fuel Consumption in MPG (l/100km) and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (g/km) for the New 208 Range are: Urban  
MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions. Image shown for illustration purposes only. Model shown is a 208  
business purchases. This offer is in addition to any other consumer offers available at the current time on New 208 Allure models and is available on orders placed 1st June – 30th September 2015. No cash alternative is available. Contact your

## NEW PEUGEOT 208

MOTION & EMOTION





40.4 – 78.5 (7.0 – 3.6), Extra Urban 61.4 – 104.6 (4.6 – 2.7), Combined 52.3 – 94.2 (5.4 – 3.0) and CO<sub>2</sub> 125 – 79 (g/km).

Hotchback 1.2 PureTech 82 5 door Allure with 16" Titane Gloss Black Alloys, with metallic paint, Cielo Panoramic Glass Roof and Menthol White exterior personalisation pack at £15,940. \*This offer is applicable to retail sales only and not on fleet or local Peugeot Dealer to redeem this offer. Prices and information correct at time of going to press. Visit [peugeot.co.uk](http://peugeot.co.uk) for full terms and conditions. Peugeot Motor Company PLC reserve the right to withdraw or amend this offer at any time.



PEUGEOT





Official fuel consumption for the all-new Volvo XC90 in MPG (l/100km) ranges from: Urban 28.8 (9.8) – 45.6 (6.2), Extra Urban 40.4(7.9) – 52.3(5.4), Combined 35.3(8.0) – 134.5(2.1).





## A NEW BEGINNING

INTRODUCING  
THE ALL-NEW **VOLVO XC90**  
MADE BY SWEDEN

BOOK YOUR TEST DRIVE  
AT **VOLVOCARS.CO.UK**



# car

AUGUST 2015



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**ON TWITTER**  
@CARmagazine

# 104

**It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to test whether the Ariel Nomad can really do all the things they say (clue: it can)**



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FOR JUST  
**£12.00**

see p74



## IN OUR iPad EDITION

**CAR's beautiful imagery works brilliantly on your tablet. Subscribe to the interactive iPad edition, with video content, our Android replica edition, or the magazine itself, on page 74**



# THE STRIKING NEW LEXUS NX

The new luxury hybrid NX.  
Striking design meets innovative technology.  
Discover the NX and will.i.am project  
at [lexus.co.uk/NX](http://lexus.co.uk/NX)



NX

FROM	AVAILABLE FROM JUST	FROM
<b>121</b>	<b>£399*</b>	<b>19%</b>
G/KM CO <sub>2</sub>	PER MONTH	BIK

• LED Headlights • Lexus Media display with DAB  
• Reversing Camera • Heated leather seats



NX

**LEXUS**  
AMAZING IN MOTION

NX 300h prices start from £29,495. Model shown is NX 300h Luxury £35,140, including optional metallic paint at £645.

\*For Business Users only. Initial rental and VAT applies. Available on new sales of NX 300h Luxury. Ordered and proposed for finance between 1 July and 30 September 2015, registered and financed by 31 December 2015 through Lexus Financial Services on Lexus Connect Contract Hire. Advertised rental based on a 3 year non-maintained contract, 8,000 miles per annum. Initial rental £1197 + VAT. Excess mileage charges apply. Other finance offers available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. Participating Lexus Centres. Lexus Centres are independent of Lexus Financial Services. Terms and conditions apply. Indemnities may be required. Finance subject to status to over 18s only. Lexus Financial Services is a trading name of Toyota Financial Services (UK) PLC. Registered Office: Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, KT18 5UJ. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The MPG figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results. They are provided for comparability purposes, and may not reflect actual driving experience.

NX 300h Luxury fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures: urban 53.3 mpg (5.3 l/100km), extra-urban 55.4 mpg (5.1 l/100km), combined 54.3 mpg (5.2 l/100km), 121g/km CO<sub>2</sub> (19% BIK)



# WELCOME.

## Has the driver had his day?



**H**OW DO you feel about the prospect of autonomous cars that could make your driving redundant? I'd understand if you felt threatened, fascinated and a little welcoming all at the same time, because that's how I feel.

This month's Insider section outlines the autonomous car trials that will take place on UK roads over the next three years, while the Tech pages investigate the automated 'seeing' technology Volvo is developing to protect vulnerable motorcyclists. Autonomy is here now with cars that park themselves, emergency brake, and cruise control that automatically negotiates motorway traffic; car manufacturers, suppliers and legislators are striving to take them to the next level, 'high automation', where the driver isn't expected to take control at any time.

Control is a major issue for me: I don't want to lose the exhilarating feeling of piloting a car along a winding road, choosing my line, feeling for grip. I don't want my car blocking me from flooring the throttle for a safe overtake. Am I being selfish, a sociopath even, when around 90% of accidents are attributed to human error, and 1713 people died on UK roads in 2013? Imagine if autonomy could eliminate almost all of those fatalities!

Question is, can you successfully write 50-million-plus lines of code to programme a car to be a better judge of the on-road environment? Given the enormous risks and liabilities, manufacturers might set up their cars to drive timidly. And that will cause frustration, especially among drivers in control of older cars that aren't yet automated.

The tragic, seismic day will come when an autonomous car is involved in someone's death. Who will be responsible: the car's occupant, the software engineer, or the CEO of the car company? Understanding the liability issues, insurance implications and deciding on regulation and common technical standards will be a big undertaking.

Trust is another massive factor: I've driven cars whose camera and radar-based collision warning systems can get confused by parked cars and Armco. More advanced LIDAR systems (Light Detection and Radar) are coming, but reportedly, one fitted to the Google car costs \$40,000 alone, and you have to use a combination of sensing systems to ensure a 360-degree field of vision.

It was reassuring to hear that Jaguar Land Rover will put experts in its 'driverless' cars, to assess whether the sensors are accurately identifying

hazards and artificial intelligence is making appropriate decisions. Jaguar and BMW have much at stake, with their brand promise built on how their cars feel to drive.

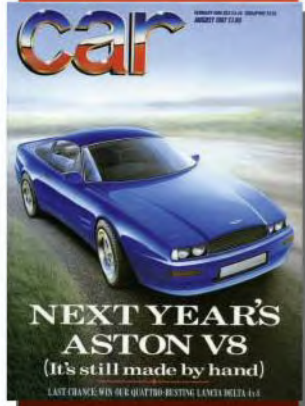
My views no doubt sound pessimistic. Don't get me wrong, I see the enormous upside: safety benefits, potential improvements in productivity and efficiency if cars drive themselves smoothly. I love the vision of the immobile being able to summon autonomous pods to ferry them right to the door of a specially designed clinic. And I'd relish being able to hand over control to the car during monotonous sections of motorway roadworks. It'll take a decade or two to build this brave new world. In the meantime, I'll be driving my car. Mostly.

**PHIL McNAMARA**  
Editor

↓  
Google's driverless car is out there already, but one of its collision-warning devices alone costs \$40,000



THIS MONTH  
IN HISTORY:  
AUGUST 1987



### NEXT YEAR'S ASTON V8

It was Aston over 28 years ago, with a spot-on Virage scoop amid 19 pages of coverage. Chairman Victor Gauntlett shared bleak stories of making a couple of dozen cars in 1982, and trying to coax suppliers to assist now it had hit the big time of 200 units! Editor Steve Cropley ruminated on the venerable V8's charms, while Phil Llewellyn ventured inside the Newport Pagnell factory. *Aston's future, p62*

### ALSO IN THAT ISSUE...

The team indulged its passion for GTIs, racking up 1200 miles in the 8v, racking up 1200 miles in the 8v and 16v Golf and Peugeot's 309. Gavin Green visited Abarth, maker of Lancia's WRC Deltas.

Not a supercar in sight: France touring guide and a trip in a 1935 Morris Eight rounded things off.

## car AROUND THE WORLD

WE'RE ALSO  
PUBLISHED IN:



CHINA



ITALY



SOUTH AFRICA



THAILAND



BRAZIL



INDIA



MALAYSIA



SPAIN



TURKEY



# INSIDER.

A detailed illustration of a futuristic city street. In the foreground, a large white autonomous pod with a red and blue Union Jack livery is shown from a high angle. The street is filled with various autonomous vehicles, including small white pods and larger cars, some with red and white livery. Pedestrians are walking on the sidewalks. The background features modern, curved buildings and a tall, white, cylindrical structure with circular windows. The overall scene is rendered in a clean, stylized, isometric-like perspective.

Cars, people, scoops, motorsport, analysis: the month according to CAR

## They're here! The driverless future starts on UK roads

This isn't a scene from *Total Recall*, it's Milton Keynes in the near future. Autonomous pods and driverless cars begin live trials soon that will change our roadscape forever. **By Phil McNamara**



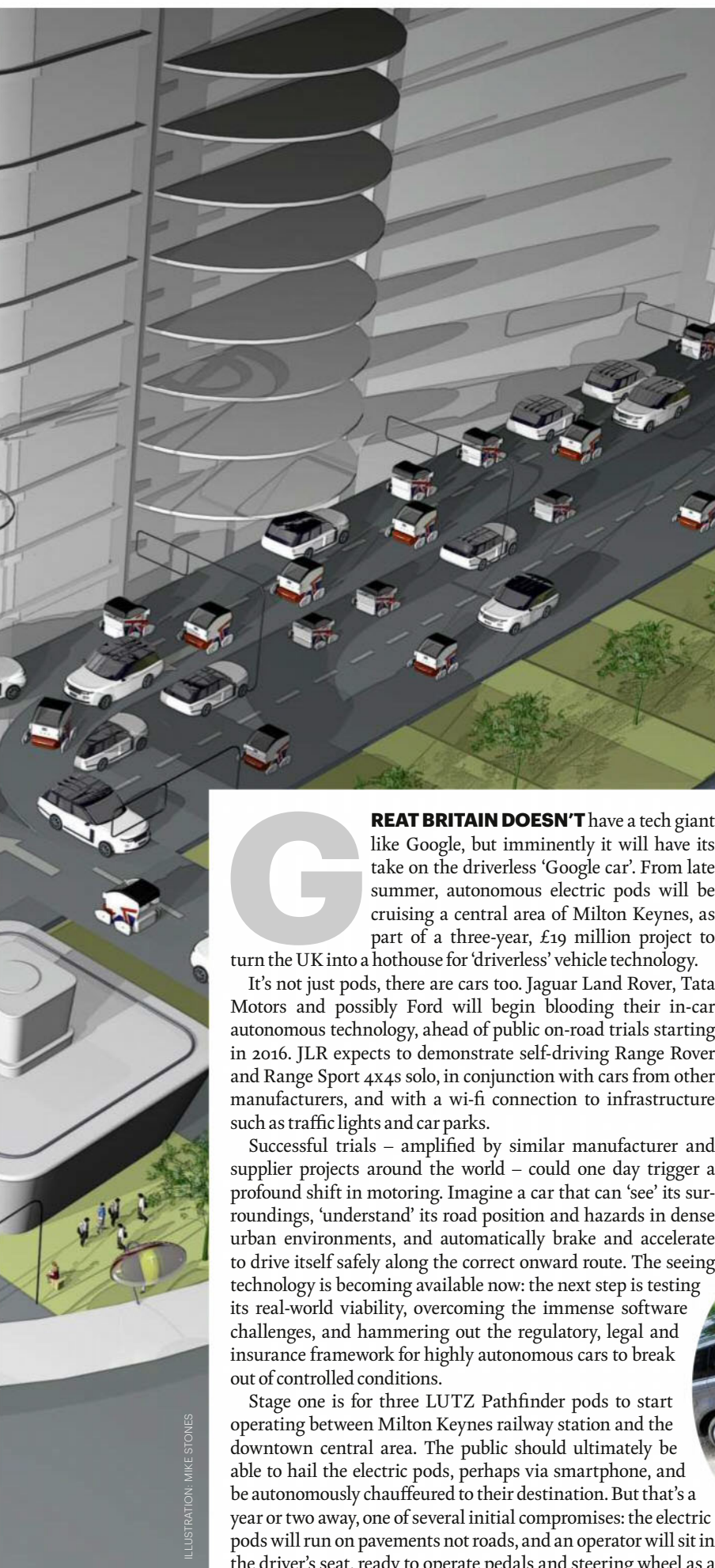


ILLUSTRATION: MIKE STONES

**G**REAT BRITAIN DOESN'T have a tech giant like Google, but imminently it will have its take on the driverless 'Google car'. From late summer, autonomous electric pods will be cruising a central area of Milton Keynes, as part of a three-year, £19 million project to turn the UK into a hothouse for 'driverless' vehicle technology.

It's not just pods, there are cars too. Jaguar Land Rover, Tata Motors and possibly Ford will begin bleeding their in-car autonomous technology, ahead of public on-road trials starting in 2016. JLR expects to demonstrate self-driving Range Rover and Range Sport 4x4s solo, in conjunction with cars from other manufacturers, and with a wi-fi connection to infrastructure such as traffic lights and car parks.

Successful trials – amplified by similar manufacturer and supplier projects around the world – could one day trigger a profound shift in motoring. Imagine a car that can 'see' its surroundings, 'understand' its road position and hazards in dense urban environments, and automatically brake and accelerate to drive itself safely along the correct onward route. The seeing technology is becoming available now: the next step is testing its real-world viability, overcoming the immense software challenges, and hammering out the regulatory, legal and insurance framework for highly autonomous cars to break out of controlled conditions.

Stage one is for three LUTZ Pathfinder pods to start operating between Milton Keynes railway station and the downtown central area. The public should ultimately be able to hail the electric pods, perhaps via smartphone, and be autonomously chauffeured to their destination. But that's a year or two away, one of several initial compromises: the electric pods will run on pavements not roads, and an operator will sit in the driver's seat, ready to operate pedals and steering wheel as a

failsafe. But after months of test runs, to assess the reliability of the technology, performance at night and in poor weather and how pedestrians interact with the pods, the ambition is to remove the operator and let pod and passenger go it alone.

'Car manufacturers are very interested in the pods, because they will be autonomous first and a great way to understand the human/machine interface,' says Tim Armitage of engineering consultancy Arup, who is co-ordinating the UK Autodrive project encompassing the Milton Keynes pods and driverless car tests. 'Will an occupant want to talk to the vehicle or press buttons, and what information will they want feeding back?'

Preparation for the driverless car trials is underway too. 'Our cars already demonstrate a level of [autonomous] capability, with radars, cameras, ultrasonic and so on,' says JLR's senior research manager Chris Holmes. 'We'll supplement these with other sensors to ensure a 360-degree view.' Test cars will be overloaded with sensing kit for safety reasons, and the trials will help assess which systems are 'redundant'.

Trials will start at the MIRA test track in Warwickshire, before public demonstrations begin in Milton Keynes and Coventry. 'We'll start on a closed road with one vehicle demonstrating simple autonomous manoeuvres,' says UK Autodrive co-ordinator Tim Armitage. 'But the trials will become more complex, ultimately with three vehicles from three different manufacturers, probably alongside manually driven cars and stuntmen as pedestrians following a script.'

JLR recently demonstrated a remote-control Range Rover Sport, and its abilities should be tested in a city centre car park as part of the trials. 'If someone's parked too close, you'll be able to use a smartphone to remotely start the vehicle, then move it to get access,' says JLR research engineer Mark Cund. 'We're trying to extend today's Intelligent Parking Assist, to a system that [autonomously] navigates a car park's static and dynamic hazards, from pillars and raised areas to pedestrians and moving vehicles.' And in a test of integrated transport, test drivers in transit to the car park could summon a Milton Keynes autonomous pod to their pre-booked space, to continue their onward journey in the heart of town.

The UK Autodrive project seeks to answer some very big questions indeed, and not just about the feasibility of in-car technology. Will vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communications via wi-fi be sufficiently fast and reliable? Coventry and Milton Keynes councils will roll out wi-fi base stations, ▶



Land Rover's smartphone-based remote control is out there. It could go further, taking over as soon as you enter a multi-storey car park and parking itself





to provide networks that will allow a test car to communicate with traffic lights for example, checking if there's sufficient green-light time to keep the car flowing to save fuel. JLR's Holmes says it's really important to test connectivity with other cars too. 'If we can establish a relationship with other vehicle makers, such as Ford and Tata, we can demonstrate that these things work on a car-to-car basis.'

Another key aspect is the public's attitude. Surveys and opinion polls will gauge public acceptance throughout the three-year trials, to see if it shifts – and to compare UK attitudes with those of people in other countries.

The government wants British industry to capitalise on the driverless cars push, developing and exporting hardware and know-how. As well as funding trials as a showcase, the government is seeking to create the most receptive environment for testing, to encourage car makers and their Tier 1 suppliers to develop systems here. Politicians have granted permission for testing on public roads anywhere, without the need for permits.

'Everyone knows there will need to be protocols,' says Tim Armitage. 'But the tricky thing is understanding when we have to standardise: do it too soon, and we might kill the innovation, and standardise on something that turns out to be suboptimal.' Ford says its priority in the UK trials is to shape common standards and regulation; this will need to be set at a European level and cover autonomous vehicles' liability, security and privacy. There will be an unholy tug-of-war over who owns the data produced by connected cars.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders commissioned KPMG to analyse the UK economic opportunity of connected and autonomous cars. KPMG estimated that, by 2030, driverless technologies could create 320,000 jobs, annually prevent more than 25,000 serious accidents and deliver a £51 billion social and economic benefit. If KPMG's predictions come true, all UK cars will be connected by 2026, and by 2030, 25% of vehicles will be capable of automated 'end-to-end journeys'.

That's the brave new world theory. The UK Autodrive project will be a fascinating step to see how well autonomous cars perform, under the harsh spotlight of reality...

## Pathfinder: the UK's Johnny Cab

LUTZ Pathfinder is one of three autonomous electric pods, which start operating in Milton Keynes this summer

Lithium ion batteries provide the power, a motor turns the rear axle, though both axles steer to give a tight turning circle

The Pathfinder has a 25-mile range and a 15mph top speed. But v-max is unlikely on pedestrian-packed pathways!

It 'sees' using laser scanners, stereo cameras and a car's Active Cruise radar

Boffin Neil Fulton says: 'The council's vision is to have 100s of pods'. Kiwi post office has expressed an interest



## 'Rivals are cold, boring – this is the new Alfa!'

Amid an operatic fanfare, the new era of Alfa Romeo dawns. First, the M3-rivalling Giulia, next, seven other new models

**S**O THIS IS the Giulia, the first of the new Alfa Romeo saloons. With rear-wheel drive no less, and in this flagship Cloverleaf form, a 503bhp twin-turbo V6 that dusts BMW's M3 to the tune of 78 horses. It's fair to say we were not expecting such a high performance thrust, when the Italians invited us to Arese to witness Alfa's rebirth.

It was the most Italian of world premieres: soaring rhetoric ('It's more than a car, it's an Alfa Romeo!') 'Other premium brands are cold, technocratic, even boring: it's time to go back to feeling the car and the road again!'), delirious passion, even blind opera singer Andrea Bocelli thundering Nessun Dorma as the car was revealed.

There's a lot at stake. A range of eight all-new Alfas is charged with selling 400,000 cars by 2018, more than six times last year's 68,000 units. Fiat Chrysler boss Sergio Marchionne has pledged €5 billion in funding: they really are throwing everything at relaunching Alfa Romeo. To get the world's attention, they launched 2016's 4640mm 3-series rival with the halo model. And there's a lot of Ferrari in this Alfa.



Giulia Quadrofoglio: they say economy is important, we say look at those tailpipes



Andrea Bocelli sung  
Nessun Dorma  
(None shall sleep).  
Spot on for the  
engineers, who'd  
worked round the  
clock to develop the  
Giulia in just  
24 months

# GIULIA



Philippe Krief, the Giulia's project leader, is ex-Ferrari and worked on the 458 and Speciale. He told me that the Cloverleaf's electrically power-assisted steering would eclipse Maranello's superfast responses just off the dead-ahead. 'This kind of precision, this directness, it's exactly the same feeling we wanted to put on this car. Our steering ratio is even lower than Ferrari's, it's below 12:1.'

Also 'inspired by Ferrari technology and skills' is the 2.9-litre six-cylinder. It copies the new turbocharged Ferraris' torque delivery, restricting it at lower revs

so you're encouraged to wind the engine out to its 7000rpm limit. The V6 is made entirely from aluminium to minimise weight over the front axle; engineers claim the Cloverleaf has a 50:50 weight distribution. Alfa is targeting class-leading performance *and* economy, so the V6 has cylinder shutdown and precise direct injection to save fuel, with the flipside being a claimed 0-62mph sprint in a BMW-beating 3.9sec.

Light weight is critical to meet both targets, and Alfa promises the Cloverleaf will have a kerb weight around 1500kg. While steel largely forms the body in white, the suspension is mostly aluminium, as are the doors and wings, and the Cloverleaf's roof and seat frames are carbonfibre. Carbon ceramic brakes are optional. The propshaft is also made of composite in every Giulia, even the four-cylinder and V6 diesel versions set for their world debuts at Frankfurt this September.

The boxfresh chassis, which Alfa claims shares no critical parts with any other group architecture, has a couple of other technical highlights. Motors manipulate aerodynamic aids in corners to boost downforce, before resetting on the straights to reduce drag. And the rear axle is equipped with torque vectoring, firing up to 100% of grunt to either driven wheel to enhance traction and turn-in. Krief describes the system as similar to a giant hand on top of the car, giving extra dynamic control.

The unveiling's final words were uttered by CEO Marchionne, who personally undertook monthly reviews during the car's unusually rapid 26-month development. 'It is no mystery that Alfa is one of the projects I've been most involved with, both operationally and emotionally,' he said. 'Over the past 30 years, Alfa has been suffering with a sense of unfulfillment. But we can finally say that today is the first day of a new era for Alfa.'

**PHIL McNAMARA** @CARPhilMc



↑  
Philippe Krief is basically Giulia's father. He's ex-Ferrari, and claims this Alfa was 'inspired by Ferrari tech and skills'





SEEN HERE FIRST!

# Six into Boxster doesn't go

Porsche's junior sports cars will switch to turbocharged fours from 2016



## New look

Classic softly-softly Porsche facelift: new lamps, LEDs and bumper mark out revised sports cars. The fireworks come in the engine bay...

## New engines

Base Boxster switches to 2.0 flat-four, S and GTS run a 2.5-litre four. Both displacements are turbocharged

**C**ORE BOXSTERS AND Caymans will adopt four-cylinder power in 2016, as Porsche radically reinvents the line-up. The Cayman's price will be cut, as it becomes the entry-level car positioned below its drop-top sibling.

Porsche has been working on four-cylinder opposite-piston engines for years, but the time has come for the new boxers to come out punching. The advanced direct-injection design is believed to make do with only one fixed-vane turbocharger.

It means the end of the 2.7-litre six in today's base Boxster and Cayman. The new entry level coupe gets a 2.0-litre flat-four with around 250bhp, while the Cayman S's 2.5 turbo should top 300bhp. With its

elevated positioning, expect the Boxster to get more power.

Given those early Cayman figures look down on poke compared with the outgoing cars, engineers will have been focused on taking weight out beyond that from losing two cylinders. R&D claim the four-pots surprisingly best the six on performance, driveability and engine noise, as well as naturally posting superior economy.

The next GTS edition would also have four cylinders, but its 370bhp would eclipse today's output by around 30 horses. That said, any future GT4 and the mooted GT4 RS would retain their six-cylinder spice.

Marketing believe the price cut will boost awareness and sales – assuming customers aren't wedded to the idea of a six.



## New name?

Rumours say Porsche may even ditch the Boxster and Cayman names, in favour of 718 to match triple-digit approach of 911 and 918 sports cars

## We hear

Juicy gossip from the CAR grapevine

**PORSCHE'S 911** is also downsizing its engines, though not as radically as **Cayman** and **Boxster**. This autumn's **991.2** introduces a **370bhp 2.7-litre turbo** in the base Carrera, while the **Carrera S** adopts a **420bhp 3.0 turbo**. Sources say the engines deliver massively enhanced torque curves

and double-digit fuel economy savings.

But it doesn't mean the end of the road for the atmospheric sixes: the **GT3 RS's 493bhp 4.0-litre** has evolution potential, sources say.

Talking of hallowed German performance badges, how will **VW** develop the **GTI badge**? 'For the time being, it only applies to **Golf** and **Polo**,' says a Wolfsburg source. But with the future of the **Golf cabriolet** tentative, next newbie GTI will be a **Beetle** or **Scirocco**. The



latter would be a proper **TT** rival, the bug approach is part of the plan to make America's VW dynamically sharper in future.

**McLaren** poked fun at **Bentley**, **Aston** and **Lambo** when it announced its 2014 pre-tax profit of £15 million. Automotive boss Mike Flewitt flashed up images of their SUVs (including Lambo's Urus, above) with

a massive cross through them. 'We are a sports car company,' he said. 'We won't push resource into other areas – there's more than enough competition in this SUV segment for now...'

**Lotus chief** Jean-Marc Gales (below) has quietly started preparing fans for the next-gen **Elise**. He told



us that customers wanted cars that were easier to get in and out of, had 'competitive infotainment' and mooted '**maybe getting some servo-assistance on the small cars**.' The next **Elise** and **Exige** 'will be faster, lighter but also easier to live with.' Expect them late 2016.

Although Lotus will post another reduced loss for 2015, headcount should be back above 2014 levels by the end of this year. The green shoots look to be appearing in Norfolk...



A JUST-SHAVED SMOOTH FEELING THAT LASTS.

AND LASTS. AND LASTS. AND LASTS. AND LASTS.

AND YOU GET THE IDEA.



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**PROGLIDE**  
WITH FLEXBALL TECHNOLOGY  
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FLEXBALL + GEL WITH SKINCARE

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THE BEST A MAN CAN GET™





## In the moment

# Escorting royalty and the Prime Minister

Need to get a dignitary through Central London safely? Protection driver Steve Plank explains how

01

### 'Highly trained individuals'

The drivers, escort riders and protection officers of the Special Escort Group (SEG) are all advanced police drivers and riders with additional firearms, protection and anti-hijack training. Next to the driver in the Jaguar is the officer in charge, who'll be receiving info via an earpiece.

02

### 'Speed isn't the main objective'

20mph in London traffic is good going. The main objective is to keep moving – the principal's more vulnerable if the car's stationary. One escort bike, the Easy Rider, will stay in front and set the speed. The others will ride ahead, clearing congestion and blocking traffic.

03

### 'The car's armour buys you time'

The Jaguar is armoured – disabling a vehicle is relatively easy but the armour makes getting at the principal much harder. It buys the team time in the worst-case scenario – in moments the armed escort riders, who carry 9mm Glocks, and the officers from the Range Rover will counter the threat.

04

### 'Nothing comes past the convoy'

The convoy runs in single file to give the escort riders space to move around it. The riders and drivers constantly watch their mirrors. Vehicles trying to overtake will be prevented from doing so – they could pose a threat, particularly motorcycles carrying a pillion passenger.

05

### 'Everything is fluid, even the route'

Here they've taken to the wrong side of the road to get around traffic. Only the pick-up and drop-off are fixed, and it's then that the principal is most vulnerable. At the drop the driver will stay in gear until the principal's well inside – they may choose to retreat back to the car.

06

### 'It's not just royals and politicians...'

As well as escorting dignitaries and royalty, the Special Escort Group is also called upon when moving individuals in and out of the Old Bailey, high-risk consignments for the Bank of England and the Crown Jewels between Buckingham Palace and the Tower of London.

BLU LIGHT TV

## NEW CAR DEBRIEF > 2015 MERCEDES-AMG A45

**1 It's war** – you didn't think Mercedes would let the 362bhp RS3 steal its 'most powerful hot hatch' crown for long, did you? Slapping the Audi back down almost immediately is the new version of the A45 AMG, which now boasts 376bhp from its 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo. That's 188bhp per litre.

**2 Fast master** – the electronically limited 155mph top speed stays the same. But 0-62mph is slashed by 0.4sec to just 4.2sec, which is as fast as a BMW M5 with the Competition Pack. It remains an awd auto only.

**3 Focused upgrades** – shorter ratios 3rd-7th also boost performance. Dynamic Select dial arrives from the C63, while AMG Dynamic Plus adds optional LSD to increase front traction, adaptive dampers and a Race setting.

**4 Cooking model** – standard A-class revisions include optional adaptive dampers, a pointier front end, more efficient engines, a manual 'box for the A250 and an 8in internal screen ready for Apple CarPlay in 2016. A-class prices from £21,000, on sale now; A45 AMG starts at £39,000.





# The new A4: in Audi's own words

Key engineers talk you around the lighter, cleaner, smarter next-generation A4, arriving late 2015. **By Ben Miller**

## Devilsome design details

'It's a characterful car with a different feeling to today's A4, and we're not doing modish design – we're sticking to Audi design,' says designer Frank Lamberty. 'The car is sharper than the previous A4. The radii in the body are very precise, very Audi; we brought the tooling guys to the point of freaking out. The lines are logical too – each one links to another. The single-frame grille is wider and lower now, with a clean line across the top, and we have different finishes, black or chrome depending on the trim. This lifts the car within its segment.'

The headlights [xenons as standard, with LED and LED Matrix options] are the signature of the new A4 – for me they are like warpaint.'



## Drag is down, efficiency up

'The saloon has a drag co-efficient of 0.23. The Avant is 0.26. Remember the aerodynamic A2? That was 0.25,' explains aero guru Islam Moni. 'At the rear of the Avant [right] you can see the low-drag design; the side blades and spoiler that push turbulent air off the back of the car. The underfloor is flat and on the Ultra we have active cooling – the grille is closed on start-up, and the system balances drag reduction with thermal management of the engine.'

Audi claims 95g/km of CO2 for the 148bhp 2.0 TDI. Other engines include a 188bhp 2.0 TDI, two 3.0 TDI sixes and three petrol engines; a clean, clever 148bhp 1.4 and two 2.0 TFSIs.



↓  
**At 505 litres the new Avant's boot is just big enough for the instruction manual**

## Almost autonomous...

'The adaptive cruise control with traffic-jam assist will steer and brake the car in stop-start traffic at speeds of up to 7mph,' says marketing man Markus Eigner. 'Predictive efficiency assistant modifies your chosen speed based on information from the onboard camera and navigation to reduce fuel usage. As with the TT, optional virtual cockpit lets you configure the 12.3-inch LCD driver display as you wish. Choose MMI Navigation plus and the rotary controller has a touchpad on top, for pinch-and-swipe zooming. All this and we've saved 7kg from the wiring loom...'



## Longer, wider, roomier

'The car is slightly longer [rear legroom is up 23mm] but it looks even longer, more elegant,' continues designer Lamberty. 'We have an important character line running down the side of the car. The glasshouse is low, quite chopped [though front passenger headroom is up 24mm], but this car is honest as a sedan – we didn't try to do a coupe with this car. The increased track widths also give us strong shoulders and nice strong arches, to emphasise quattro.'



●  
**Classy cockpit borrows ideas from last year's Prologue concept car**

## Lighter, with an improved ride and better steering

'Weight reduction was one of our main goals,' explains Dr Horst Glaser, head of chassis development [Audi claims the A4's 120kg lighter than the old, depending on model]. 'We have used more aluminium parts in combination with high-strength steel. The five-link front suspension is 6kg lighter. The electro-mechanical steering saves another 5kg. The steering itself is more precise and direct, with a better feeling

around the dead ahead. We made a switch on the brakes too, depending on the engine. Some models still use a sliding caliper but on others we have lighter, stiffer aluminium calipers, saving 5kg and giving better pedal feel and increased braking performance. Comfort is improved – we had some complaints from British customers saying the [outgoing car's] ride was not good on cambered, bumpy British roads.'



**H**AS THERE EVER been a start-up racing series that's garnered more column inches than Formula E? The all-electric, city-based single-seater championship seemingly has as many virulent detractors as it does passionate evangelists, but the point is: everyone's talking about it. And with London's Battersea Park the venue for the season finale, we had to drop in, to satisfy our curiosity.

Morning practice is underway as we arrive. From trackside, the cars' much debated sound (or lack of) isn't exactly goosebump material but it is more nuanced than the Scalextric white noise you hear on TV; a blend of transmission whine and gearchanges (all cars have a sequential gearbox), swooshing road noise and occasional tyre squeal from the treaded Michelins. And when the latter let go, you can hear the resultant 'oooooh' from the crowd whenever someone makes a big save. As the cars pelt past at full tilt you can easily maintain relaxed conversation, and hear the commentary over its bed of incongruous dance music pumped out by the Formula E 'EJ' – one of the more forced elements of the festival atmosphere.

It's not just the sound and fury of racing engines that's conspicuous by its absence. There's not much in the way of crowding either. Around 60,000 people come through the gates from Friday to Sunday; the four-day Goodwood Festival of Speed on the same weekend had 200,000. As Saturday's action rages quietly on, one woman sits reading a paperback on an empty grass bank an underarm stone's throw from the start-finish line. Elsewhere, buoyed by afternoon sunshine, people languish on benches and stroll around the park. Many of them are families with children, enjoying a day out. Few

pay much attention to the racing.

You can't blame them. The 1.8-mile track around the park's perimeter roads is so narrow (around 9m at its widest) overtaking is all but impossible and with a dearth of big screens, the view at each grandstand is limited to a brief snapshot of the cars as they whirl through the track's chicken-run confines – usually in the same order as the lap before. There's no doubting the calibre of the drivers (the grid's packed with ex-F1 and Le Mans stars), or the skill they display around the bumpy, unforgiving layout but ultimately a tight circuit with barely any passing opportunities is unlikely to enamour the casual racing fans the sport aims to attract.

There's some genuine intrigue in the decider on Sunday, however, as eventual champion Nelson Piquet Jr is forced to scrap for points from 16th on the grid after encountering the only rain of the weekend during his qualifying run, and Brit Sam Bird scores a welcome, but confusing, home win by dint of on-the-road victor Stéphane Sarrazin using up more of his car's allotted energy than permitted. A fittingly unpredictable end to a divisive first season.

Viewing Formula E as a competitor to F1 is as foolish as it would be to dismiss it out of hand; it's in its infancy after all, and will continue to learn and evolve. Insiders tacitly admit making it to the end of the first season was a challenge in itself. That it offers something different is undeniable; given time, it will offer more exciting racing too. Maybe it was the weather, but folk looked happy heading home from Battersea. Perhaps we should give peace (and quiet) a chance.



Sam Bird won... thanks to some incomprehensible rule technicality



## What makes a Formula E car (literally) tick?

### CHASSIS

By Dallara – a modded GP2 tub, extended to protect the battery

### MOTOR

By McLaren – closely related to that of the P1 hypercar

### BATTERY

By Williams – 200kW, feeds equivalent of 270bhp to the motor

### GEARBOX

By Hewland – but next season, transmission regs are open

### TYRES

By Michelin – narrow,

big (18-inch) and treaded, like road tyres

### THE STATS

0-62mph in 3.0sec, max speed 140mph, max power 200kW (equivalent to 270bhp), minimum weight 896kg

### THE REGS

Initially, FE is a 'spec' formula using virtually identical cars. Over the next five years, powertrain and battery regs will be opened up to create a constructors' championship.

## MOTORSPORT

# Is Formula E any good?

The first season of electric grand prix racing ended in London's Battersea Park. We were there to see if it works as a spectacle. By James Taylor



There are 10 Formula E teams, with big backers like Audi, Renault, Virgin and Mahindra. Winner Piquet races for NEXTEV



# The driving test: 80 years of hurt

It's been a rite of passage for us all since 1935. Taking it is awful, passing it bliss. Here's its potted history



## 1935

The driving test arrives. It lasts 30mins, there's a 63% pass rate and 246,000 initial candidates. Further legislation brings the L-plate and 30mph urban limit. First to pass, Mr R Beere, pays 7/6d (37.5p) for the privilege.

## 1939

War! Testing is suspended as examiners are redeployed to traffic and fuel rationing duties. Testing resumes in 1946. There's another suspension in 1956 for the Suez Crisis.

## 1959

Examiner training school opens; previously they trained on the job.

## 1973

First computerised licences issued, replacing old red booklets.

## 1975

Arm signals dropped from official test.



## 1996

Written Theory Test replaces Highway Code questions during practical test; the pass mark is increased from 26/35 to 30/35 after just three months.

## 1999

First Photocard licences introduced; practical test gets longer and emergency stop procedure is randomised.

## 2007

Theory test now 50 questions; you must answer 43 correctly.

## 2003

Candidates must demonstrate rudimentary car safety knowledge.

## 2002

Hazard perception introduced: video clips test candidates' awareness.

## 1997

New drivers receiving six or more penalty points within two years of passing lose their licence and must retake both theory and practical tests.

**Driving  
test centre**

## Connect 4

### FIAT 500

As the cute, retro 500 gets a reboot we trace the tiny giants of its heritage



### The facelift

Fiat 500 (2007-present)

Bug-eyed facelift to breathe new life into eight-year-old model (ancient by modern standards) has us reaching for the fly spray. But new tech inside should satisfy the trend-seeking young urbanites already queuing round the block.



### The inbetweener

Fiat Cinquecento (1991-1998)

Front-engined Fiat 126 successor had all the angles and panel integrity of a biscuit tin, but was fun to drive in 1.1-litre Sporting guise. Unusually offered both longitudinal and transverse engine mounting. Name means '500' in Italian.



### The classic

Fiat Nuovo 500 (1957-1975)

And you thought the current 500 was lasting forever? This rear-engined icon was a marvel of packaging and can go toe-to-toe with the Mini in terms of significance, right down to competition pedigree. Nearly 3.9m were produced.



### The original

Fiat 500 'Topolino' (1936-1955)

Proving Fiat and small cars really do go back a long way, this 'little mouse' (the literal translation) was the smallest car in production and helped democratise the automobile. Model A, B and C versions offered, 16bhp max. 520,000 sold.



# Playtime is over

## Trackday toys just got serious

Call that a trackday car? *This* is a trackday car... etc. You'll need to raid an actual bank not a piggy bank to afford one of these hardcore specials from Lotus, Elemental and KTM. By **CJ Hubbard**



### Lotus 3-Eleven

This is the most expensive Lotus series production car ever – and you don't even get a roof. Think of it as the antidote to the excessive pipedreams of the Bahar era: a stripped-back road-racer that trades creature comforts for low weight and high performance. That isn't the same as saying the 3-Eleven is basic. The bodywork, for example, is made from a new 'resin infusion composite' some 40% lighter than conventional glassfibre reinforced plastic. The

interior gets a full-colour digital instrument cluster with road and race settings. And out back, nestled within the latest Lotus extruded aluminium chassis, is a 450bhp evolution of the supercharged V6 from the Evora, capable of 0-60 in under 3.0sec and 180mph flat-out in £82,000 'Road' configuration. Alternatively, £115k buys you a 'Race' 3-Eleven, complete with sequential gearbox, full rollcage and an aero package so aggressive it generates 215kg of downforce.

#### NEED TO KNOW

> **Price** £82,000-£115,200 > **Engine** 3.5 supercharged V6, 450bhp > **Transmission** 6-speed (manual Road, sequential Race), rwd > **Weight/made from** 900kg/aluminium and RIC > **Ideal for** Lottery-winning Elise obsessives > **On sale** Now

### Elemental RP1

That Lotus downforce? It's measured at 150mph. Sounds great – until you learn this Elemental RP1 is promising 200kg at 100mph. Which probably leaves you wondering a) where's the big wing, and b) what the hell is an Elemental? Essentially, it's what a bunch of former McLaren personnel did next, the 165mph RP1 being their response to the seemingly opened-ended question: 'What's the perfect trackday car?' Featuring fully adjustable in-board suspension

that's easily accessed via removable body panels, and an F1-style 'feet up' driving position, the RP1 majors on cutting edge underfloor aero (hence no wing) yet is still designed to be exceptionally usable – even on the road. Based around a carbon and aluminium tub, it weighs 620kg and will initially be powered by a tweaked Ford Ecoboost 2.0-litre producing 280bhp, with other options pending. 0-60mph in 3.1sec, 60-100mph in 4.3sec, launch price: £75,750.

#### NEED TO KNOW

> **Price** £75,750 > **Engine** 2.0 Ecoboost turbo 4-cyl, 280bhp > **Transmission** 6-speed sequential, rwd > **Weight/made from** 620kg/carbonfibre and aluminium > **Ideal for** Dating the BAC Mono's girlfriend > **On sale** First quarter of 2016



### KTM X-BOW GT4

From wannabe track stars to a *bona fide* racing car. While this might look like the midget offspring of a Bugatti EB110 and a Gumpert Apollo, it is in fact the GT4 racing version of the KTM X-Bow. And despite that appearance, it is actually based around the same structure as the minimalist original. Now clad in carbonfibre bodywork and with modified chassis geometry, it's been built to win in the 'affordable' entry category for international GT racing.

Which is what it promptly did, first time out in May. The rulemakers are continuing to adjust its 'balance of performance' as a result, but suffice to say the VW Group 2.0-litre turbo engine in the back produces in excess of 300bhp. Development partner Reiter Engineering (the firm that builds Lamborghini's racing cars) is confident the new GT4 will prove highly reliable – after all, the basic package has been deathtuned on track days for the last six years.

#### NEED TO KNOW

> **Price** £100,000 > **Engine** 2.0 TFSI turbo 4-cyl, 340bhp (subject to balance of performance) > **Transmission** 6-speed Holinger sequential, rwd > **Weight/made from** 999kg/carbonfibre > **Ideal for** Kicking ass in GT4 racing > **On sale** Now



# WELCOME TO MY WORLD



JOHN TRAVOLTA

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# ‘There’s a little Soichiro Honda in Ariel – his enthusiast spirit’

Thrasher of £500 E-type Jaguars, father of the Atom, low-volume car-making guru – Ariel’s **Simon Saunders** is all of these things. What drives him?

**W**HILE THE ATOM sports car, Ace motorcycle and now Nomad all-terrain buggy (see p104) are pretty fine creations, perhaps Ariel boss Simon Saunders’ biggest achievement is making small-volume car manufacturing look almost easy, fun even. Ariel’s story – one of careful growth, trusted reliability and a merry tribe of satisfied customers – doesn’t follow the usual script for this kind of operation: sleepless nights, scary loans, bubbling fibreglass, raging customers and, finally, sweet relief in the form of bankruptcy and closure.

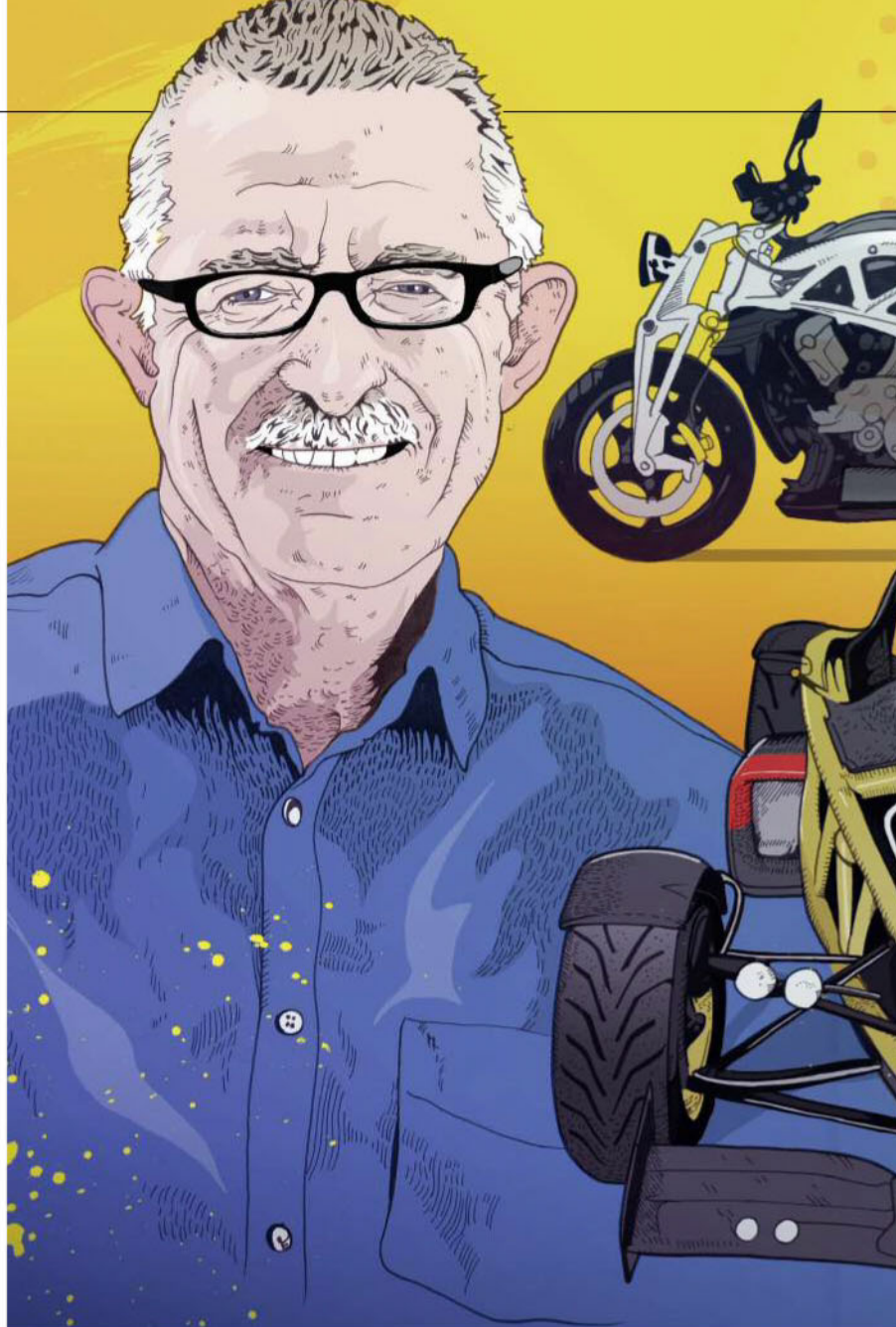
Founded in 1999, Ariel this time around (the original maker of cars, three-wheelers and motorcycles bit the dust in the 1970s) is built upon the success of the Atom. Developed from a light-weight sports car project at Coventry University, where Saunders worked as a lecturer in Transport Design, the skeletal Atom was born of Saunders’ desire to ‘make the car Colin Chapman would make if he were around to do a new Lotus Seven’.

‘When we did Atom it was on the basis that, while I thought it would be a success, if it had failed I wasn’t going to lose my house,’ says Saunders. ‘It would have been a waste of money, three plus years and a lot of effort but it wouldn’t have been a disaster.’

While Ariel remains synonymous with the Atom, the Somerset-based firm has diversified recently with the Ace motorcycle (unveiled last year), again with Honda power, and now the Nomad. At the same time development of the Atom is ongoing, with a lightweight loom (saves 8kg) and a titanium chassis currently under evaluation (‘a bitch of a material to work with but we’re seeing a 40% weight reduction’).

The response to both the Ace and Nomad has been as breathlessly enthusiastic as it was to the Atom, and as a result Saunders is currently evaluating just how big to let Ariel become.

‘We’re stretching at the seams in terms of space, so we’re using a consultant to help us work out how big we should be,’ explains Saunders. ‘To be successful you



## CAR’S CURVEBALLS 6 questions only we would ask...

### About your first car...

‘It was a 3.8 fixed-head coupe E-type Jaguar I bought for £500. One night we were out trying to hit the magic 155mph, me trying to keep it in a straight-ish line, my girlfriend watching the speedo. Then I saw a pair of lights catching us up – a Miura, also flat-out and wandering around a little.’

### Which achievement makes you proud?

‘Family aside I guess it has to be the Atom. It’s done so well, it supports all the guys

here and it gave us a start. I hope there’ll always be an Atom. But there’s more to come’

### What’s the best thing you’ve done in a car?

‘It involves a Ford Escort and a night on a farm track just outside St Tropez with my now wife. A fine car the Ford Escort, when parked.’

### Tell us how you screwed up...

‘There were projects prior to Ariel which I got a fair way through before realising that they weren’t going to work. Putting a project

in the bin when you’ve spent a lot of time, effort and money on it is a hard thing to do – it feels as though you’ve made a colossal mistake. But continuing would have been a bigger mistake.’

### Supercar or classic?

‘I love anything with wheels and power. I have my classic icons – 275 GTB Ferrari, ‘63 Corvette Sting Ray – but for me the reality never matches the dream, so I’d come down on the side of supercars, though for going fast I’d rather have an Atom. We’re also into Land Rover Defenders. Mine’s currently a very loud V8, called the EarDefender,

which I suppose is some kind of weird anti-christ combination of supercar and classic.’

### Company curveball... Ariel has previous with three-wheelers – any chance of a comeback?

‘Ah, the Ariel 3 scooter. I’m not convinced on three-wheeled cars. Morgan have done well with theirs but I can’t see a valid reason for a three-wheeler, other than the fact it’s not a four- or two-wheeler. We have an Ariel 3 (the infamous ‘70s scooter). One of our guys is an ex-motocross racer and he pronounced it the most terrifying thing he’s ever ridden.’





RICHARD PARDON



↑ The go-anywhere, do-anything Nomad: 'In part it came out of conversations with guys who wanted an off-road Atom'

have to be either big or small. Small is a couple of hundred vehicles a year; big is 6000-plus. That's where you start getting economies of scale. TVR syndrome is where you just build more and more cars but without achieving economy of scale.'

Clearly Ariel is doing something right. Saunders' advice, should you fancy a career change into low-volume sports car manufacturing? Essentially stay small, play to your strengths, bag yourself a brilliant engine and keep your customers happy. Sounds so simple...

'I've worked with high-volume companies and low-volume companies, and I've seen mid-engined supercar projects with dream-world business plans come and go,' says Saunders. 'You have to be realistic about what's feasible as a low-volume manufacturer. We're not going to make a Golf rival or try to take on Ford. But there are things we can do that they can't. We're close to our customers – in part Nomad came out of conversations with guys wanting an off-road Atom. And while it's not particularly efficient to have one person build each car, our customers like the fact that they can call and talk to the guy who built their car. We're also close

to our suppliers. We could make the chassis in-house or do our own composites, but if you're going to do a steel chassis it's a good idea to go to someone who's been building steel chassis for years; use their experience and expertise.'

Saunders admits Honda power has been instrumental to Ariel's success. 'The relationship came about via another project – that fizzled out but we ended up with the engine in our car,' he says. 'We were using the Rover K-series originally, which was okay as standard but you're asking a lot of it if you tune it. Plus everyone was using it. The standard Honda Type R engine gave out the same power as a heavily tuned Rover engine but was ultra reliable. Even now, in 350bhp, supercharged form, it's reliable. And I like to think there's a bit of Soichiro Honda in Ariel, his enthusiast, obsessive spirit.'

A burgeoning business, blizzards of Nomad enquiries from Atom owners, newcomers, desert racers and the military ('If they get in touch wanting hundreds we'll have to do some head-scratching'), and a cosy ongoing relationship with one of the planet's most respected engine makers – not bad for a car-obsessed kid whose careers teacher suggested he might like to work in a bank.

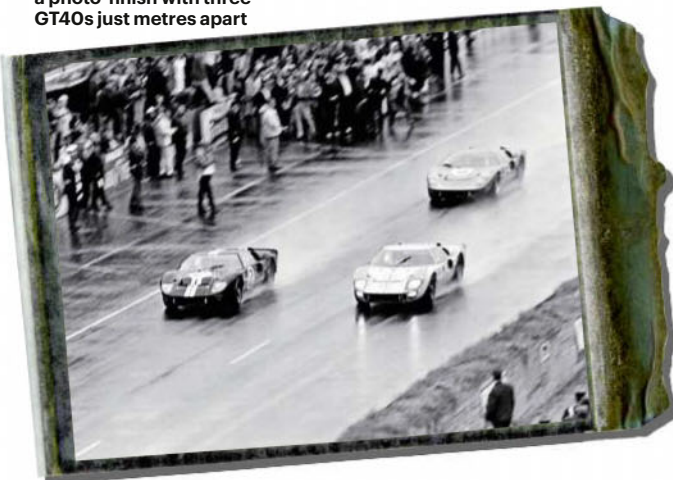
**BEN MILLER**



Simon Saunders didn't split the Atom, he created it – along with the Ace motorbike and now the Nomad. 'I hope there'll always be an Atom, but there's more to come'

ILLUSTRATION: MATTHEW HOLLINGS

Le Mans '66: Ford stages a photo-finish with three GT40s just metres apart



## Events that rocked the car world

# When Ford crushed Ferrari at Le Mans

**HOW BADLY DID** Ford want to win Le Mans in 1966? So badly it entered no less than eight GT40 Mk2s, across three teams; with five Mk1s in the hands of privateers, there were 13 Fords in a total field of 55 cars. Talk about stacking the odds.

The reason is legend. When Enzo backed out of a deal to sell Ferrari to Ford in 1963, Henry Ford II was so furious he vowed public revenge: 'All right, we'll beat his ass. We'll race him.' Thus began a multi-million-dollar programme, which would achieve just three years later the 1-2-3 finish that stands out in the history books.

While Ford didn't exactly start from scratch, turning to Lola to help create the new racer, it wasn't until Carroll Shelby got involved at the end of 1964 that the car began fulfilling its potential. Though even with a maiden victory at Daytona, the rest of 1965 is best considered a learning curve. A steep one.

Come '66, however, the learning was done. Now powered by a 7.0-litre NASCAR engine, substantially overhauled and dubbed Mk2, the GT40 swept the podium at the inaugural Daytona 24 hours in February. There was another one-two-three finish at the Sebring 12 hours in March (albeit with second and third taken by earlier

variants), and then came Le Mans in June.

To be honest, there wasn't much competition at *La Sarthe*. Ferrari sent just two works P3s, and neither made it to the finish. American publication *Autoweek* reported that fans were 'apathetic' to the Ford 'steamroller', then confused by Ford's botched attempt to stage a photo-finish (Bruce McLaren in fact won it, from Ken Miles). But the car got the headlines, and that was what mattered – the first overall victory at Le Mans for an American-made machine since 1921.

The European racing establishment could have shrugged that off; really it's the following three victories at Le Mans that secured the GT40's reputation – four consecutive wins! Yet 1966 is so significant Ford is returning to Le Mans next year on the 60th anniversary with a racing version of its new GT supercar. This won't be gunning for overall honours, but goal one – surely – is to beat the equivalent Ferraris.

**CJ HUBBARD**

Ford GT: bringing the blue oval back to Le Mans in 2016





# What's it all about, Alpine?

Renault will relaunch Alpine later this year with a brand new coupe targeting Cayman and 4C, timed to coincide with the marque's 60th anniversary. Here's why you should care. **By CJ Hubbard**

## The original:

### Alpine A106 1955-1960

The first car to wear the Alpine badge was like a French Porsche 356. This glassfibre coupe, based on the rear-engined Renault 4CV, was designed for competition, despite just 59bhp. Innovative features included rear suspension with four shocks and a five-speed 'box that was such a novelty it was 35% of the price of a standard 4CV.



## The previous one:

### Alpine GTA/A610 1991-1995

Follow up to the A310 and GTA, the A610 was widely praised for its 180mph rear-engined performance, but slow sales saw Renault shutter the brand in 1995.



## The icon:

### Alpine A110 Berlinette 1961-1978

The A110's aggressive looks, backbone chassis with rear-engine layout and Renault R8 oily bits took Alpine to international acclaim. Especially in rallying, where it achieved a 1-2-3 finish in Monte Carlo twice, won the inaugural World Rally Championship, and essentially set the blueprint for the Lancia Stratos. Thousands were sold, but with the Suez Crisis it wasn't enough to save Alpine financially, leading Renault to step in and buy the company in 1973.



## The future:

### Alpine Celebration 2015

We'll finally see a new Alpine road car in 2015, though sales are unlikely before 2017. It won't look like the mad Vision Gran Turismo Concept – designed for the PlayStation – but this Alpine Celebration seen running at Le Mans and Goodwood holds plenty of clues. Expect power to come from a turbo four, making it more of a rival to the Alfa 4C than the Porsche 911.



## The innovator: Alpine M65 1965

Purpose-built for endurance racing's new Index of Performance class, the M65's supreme aero and 669kg kerb weight meant it achieved over 160mph from just 1300cc and 130bhp. Best result was victory in the Nürburgring 500km.

## The Le Mans winner:

### Alpine A442B 1978

Fruit of newly formed Renault Sport, a conglomeration of Alpine and Gordini, the A442B was built to win Le Mans, and did so in 1978. Powered by a 2.1-litre V6 turbo, it hit 223mph on the Mulsanne straight.





**SEEN HERE FIRST!**

# Now Lotus jumps on the SUV bandwagon

Chinese built, Japanese powered, hybrid drivetrain? Yikes. But fear not, Chapman fans, it'll be the lightest SUV ever

**R**EMEMBER THE 'WHAT car would Jesus drive?' campaign, which challenged consumers to think about their wheels' ecological impact? There's a new game in town: 'would Colin Chapman have built a Lotus SUV?'

The current Lotus CEO, Jean-Marc Gales, thinks the company founder would have: 'It's a segment he would not neglect, I'm pretty sure.' Gales, CEO for just over a year, has agreed to assemble a Lotus SUV with a Chinese car maker, Goldstar. It should be on sale in China by 2020, and 'if the car is a runaway success, we will export it. There may be some modifications to European handling and engine management which we'd do at Hethel.'

Gales has put the Norfolk car maker on the path to profita-

bility, with sales set to climb to 3000 this financial year, up from 1296 in 2013, and the automotive operation set to generate more cash than it spends. The Evora 400 and roadster, 3-Eleven track car and revamped Elise/Exige are up first, but development work is underway on the SUV too. Lotus is producing two full-size models, as part of the manufacturing licence application.

Gales vows the SUV will conform to Chapman's 'performance out of lightweight' creed. 'It looks like a Lotus SUV, it looks lightweight, and it will drive like no other SUV because it will be much lighter,' he says. The SUV will be similar in size to a Porsche Macan, but lower, wider and potentially 200kg lighter.

Lotus will use aluminium and composites to shoot for a 1700kg vehicle, and share as many components as possible – seat frames, heating/ventilation system, dashboard parts and trim – with the next-generation sports cars. 'If they are very small and light, the SUV benefits on weight, and the sports cars benefit from the volume cost saving.'

The engine line-up also rips up the rulebook: because of the light weight 'you can have a four-cylinder engine maybe coupled with a hybrid,' says the boss. A six-cylinder is also likely for a high-performance version. 'I'd love the engine supplier to be Toyota because we have a very good relationship, but I don't exclude [other parties]. We've just started the discussion with Toyota.'

So there you have it: a Chinese-assembled, hybrid Lotus SUV is on the cards. Colin Chapman would have needed to be incredibly pragmatic to have approved it – just like Porsche. And Jaguar. And BMW, Aston Martin, Rolls-Royce and so on...

**PHIL McNAMARA**

## The looks

'It will look stunning,' says Jean-Marc Gales. 'At the front you'll see a taste of 3-Eleven, plus hints of the 1974 Elite and other Lotus cars'

## The engines

'You can have a four-cylinder, maybe coupled with a hybrid, and turbocharged. You probably need a six for a performance version,' says the boss

## The bulk

'It's the package of a Macan, but some 200-300kg lighter. We will use some aluminium and composites, and put the SUV in our lightweighting programme'

## The other SUV

Lotus had proposed a jacked-up Evora, but the business case failed. 'I would have loved to do it, but it required massive changes to the wishbones and body'





WATCHES

# Sports car watches are kings of cool

Who'd want a big fat bling F1 watch? Tasteless! Endurance heroes win the style battle every time

**IF YOU FIND** the big-money sponsorship deals between the watch companies and Formula One too commercial, and the watches too garish, you should look to sportscar racing for inspiration. Here are three very different watches which all pay tribute to a hero of endurance racing. One is vintage, one is new but retro, and one is entirely modern. The two new watches have just been launched, and one is from the brand that just helped Porsche to win at Le Mans for the first time in 17 years.

**BEN OLIVERO** @thebenoliver



## Chopard Superfast Chrono Porsche 919 Jacky Ickx £8460

**Chopard backs Porsche's new Le Mans winners, hails an old one**  
Last year, Chopard took the bold step of sponsoring Porsche's new WEC team instead of the more predictable, over-exposed F1 teams favoured by other watchmakers. It paid off sooner than they might have expected with the stunning 1-2 win by the 919 Hybrids at La Sarthe last month. The 'Superfast' is the team watch, and Chopard revealed this limited-edition version at the race. It pays tribute to six-time winner and Porsche legend Jacky Ickx, and features Chopard's in-house flyback chronograph movement.

[www.chopard.com](http://www.chopard.com)

## Autodromo Prototipo Brian Redman Edition £620

**Super-credible tribute watch with signed book; incredible value**  
Autodromo's founder Bradley Price really knows his historic cars and motorsport, and it shows in the drivers he chooses to pay tribute to with his limited editions. His Vic Elford watch rapidly sold out, and you'll need to move fast to get one of these, which celebrates another British hero from the glory days of endurance racing: Brian Redman. The caseback has an engraving of the Nürburgring, and the dial echoes the colours of the Porsche 908 in which Redman won the 1000km race there in 1969.

[www.pageandcooper.com](http://www.pageandcooper.com)



## Heuer Autavia 'Siffert' £10,000

**Rare '60s chrono worn by a hero, now with a value to match**  
But what if you want the watch your endurance-racing hero actually wore in his pomp? Forget the better-known Carrera and Monaco: the Autavia was Heuer's original and best chronograph for automobile or aviation use, hence the name. It was the choice of Steve McQueen's role model, Swiss racer Jo Siffert (right). They might have worn Monacos when filming *Le Mans*, but wheel-dealer Jo wore an Autavia, sold them to other drivers, and gave his name to his favoured and now much sought-after white and blue-dial version.

[www.chrono24.com](http://www.chrono24.com)



## NEW CAR DEBRIEF > PEUGEOT 308 GTi (by PEUGEOT SPORT)

**1 The power of two** – Peugeot has confirmed full details of the new 308 GTi. Or GTis, as it turns out, since two versions are being offered straight from launch: one with 247bhp and another with 266bhp, dubbed 'ultimate'. Both get 1.6 turbo power and hit UK dealerships in October this year.

**2 Peugeot Sport** – both versions of the 308 GTi are 'by Peugeot Sport', unlike the 208 GTi, which reserves that label for the more powerful variant. This means Peugeot's racing arm signed off the chassis no matter which one you go for. Good news, as the competition department worked wonders on the 208 and the RCZ R.

**3 Special sauce** – upgrades include recalibrated springs and dampers, 11mm lower ride height, wider front and rear track. Prices start at £26,555 and £28,155, 0-62mph takes 6.2sec or 6.0sec, but either way the car emits just 139g/km CO2. Two-tone 'Coupe Franche' paint is a £1300 option.

**4 Ultimate buzz** – the extra 19hp may cost £1600 but it sweetens the deal with 19in rather than 18in alloys, grippier tyres, bigger brakes (380mm fronts with aluminium hubs and Peugeot Sport branded calipers), tastier alcantara seats and a Torsen limited-slip differential. Buy this one – it'll be worth it for the diff alone.





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TYRES





# TECH.

The innovations transforming our driving world

## Volvo's radar crusade to save motorcyclists

Collision-avoidance tech enters its next phase as Euro NCAP gears up to include it in crash testing by 2018. How will it work?

1

A motorist slows down at a T-junction but fails to see a motorcyclist approaching at 40mph from the left on the main road. Thinking the road is clear, the motorist accelerates and turns right, putting SUV and bike on a collision course.



**M**OTORCYCLISTS account for just 1% of traffic but represent 20% of fatalities on UK roads. Now Volvo is working to dramatically reduce that number. The challenge is pushing collision-avoidance technology to its limits, with laser detection, more responsive sensors, and systems that work at far greater angles to the car's direction of travel all under evaluation.

'You have a high level of reduction of in-car fatalities, but you don't see that trend on cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians,' says Jan Ivarsson, deputy director of safety systems. 'In young economies, this is really the problem, and from a governmental perspective it will be a focus for the future.'

Pedestrian and cyclist detection systems already exist. The new Volvo XC90 uses a

Delphi radar and camera system integrated at the top of the windscreen. Should it detect pedestrians stepping into the vehicle's path, it automatically applies full braking between 1 and 1.5 seconds ahead of impact if the driver fails to react. The system also stops the car if a cyclist travelling in the same direction swerves into its path, or the car fails to stop at a T-junction.

The next challenge is motorcyclists travelling at higher speeds. Closest to production is a system that builds on today's blind-spot recognition technology (BLIS), which flashes a warning in the relevant A-pillar base when a car or motorbike is in or entering the vehicle's blind spot. Early BLIS systems used cameras, but today's tech uses radar sensors mounted behind the rear wheels, giving a longer range outside of the

blind-spot area. With faster-acting, more sophisticated sensors, next-generation systems will detect motorcyclists approaching at higher speeds from behind, such as when filtering between lanes of traffic. Plans include combining BLIS with Lane-Keep Assist systems to automatically brake and steer the car away from the biker, averting disaster if a frustrated motorist suddenly swerves to a faster-flowing lane.

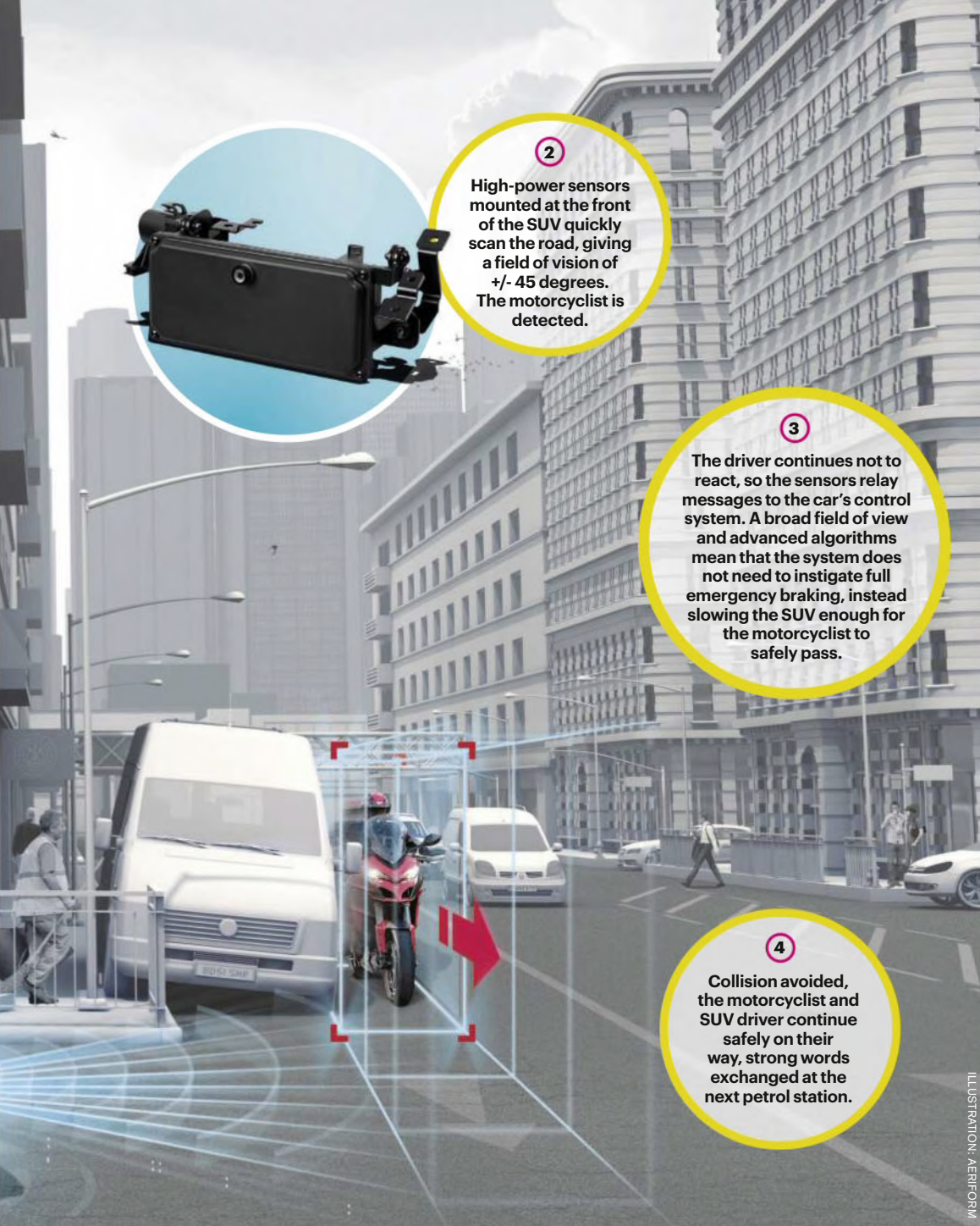
The Royal Society For The Prevention of Accidents lists failure of drivers to stop at junctions as one of the four major causes of



**XC90's trifocal camera mounted at top of windscreen. Radar works better at higher speeds**







2

High-power sensors mounted at the front of the SUV quickly scan the road, giving a field of vision of +/- 45 degrees. The motorcyclist is detected.

3

The driver continues not to react, so the sensors relay messages to the car's control system. A broad field of view and advanced algorithms mean that the system does not need to instigate full emergency braking, instead slowing the SUV enough for the motorcyclist to safely pass.

4

Collision avoided, the motorcyclist and SUV driver continue safely on their way, strong words exchanged at the next petrol station.

ILLUSTRATION: AERFORM

motorcyclist fatalities. Currently, Volvo's collision-avoidance tech features a field of view of +/- 25 degrees. This means today's XC90 can approach a junction and detect a motorcyclist approaching side-on when the relative speed of the two is less than 24mph, and the motorcyclist is travelling at less than half the speed of the XC90. To process higher speeds and for the motorcyclist to be spotted while travelling at an *equal* speed to the car, Volvo is exploring options to broaden the field of view to at least +/- 45 degrees. Insiders say that while today's radar and camera system could be evolved, cameras have limitations in tracking objects while the vehicle is moving. More powerful radar sensors mounted at the front of the vehicle have greater potential, while a LIDAR system is also under evalua-

tion – as used by Google's autonomous car – which illuminates a moving target with a laser to calculate its distance.

Today's computers are already powerful enough, and sensors will continue to monitor conditions 40-times-per-second, but the algorithms will become more complex. Full auto braking won't be necessary – the processors must instead instantly calculate how much braking force is required to allow the biker to safely clear the junction.

Volvo won't be drawn on timescales, but Euro NCAP is considering implementing scenarios with a minimum field of vision of +/- 45 degrees by 2018, and such systems are sure to make production. With motorcyclists accounting for 331 of the 1713 fatalities on UK roads last year, you can see why.

**BEN BARRY** @lamBenBarry



If even one of the 331 biker lives lost in 2014 could have been saved, it would be worth it

## Download lowdown

The monthly test bench for in-car apps



### CARRENTALS

£Free/App/Android

**What is it?** Global car rental comparison app

**How it works:** Enter your destination and dates, get prices for a range of rentals

**Cool feature:** Filter by car type, fuel, gearbox and proximity to destination

**Usability:** Could look slicker, but perfectly functional

**Rating:** 7/10



### MOTORSPORT NETWORK

£Free/App/Android

**What is it?** Worldwide racetrack finder

**How it works:** Search for the track, learn all about it: track length, history, contacts...

**Cool feature:** Check the weather, tips from pro drivers

**Usability:** Good, but navigate-to-track, on-board footage, calendars and circuit maps all obvious omissions

**Rating:** 5/10



### DRIVING IN EUROPE

£0.79 App/£0.66 Android

**What is it?** Guide to driving regs, speed limits and legal alcohol limits

**How it works:** Click the country, learn the rules

**Cool feature:** Check likely speeding fines; er... doubles as a guide to flags

**Usability:** Intuitive, but pretty basic and info patchy – no tolls in UK, allegedly

**Rating:** 4/10



### DASHCAM

£Free/App/Android

**What is it?** Captures your car journeys

**How it works:** Mount your smartphone to see the road ahead, press record, then playback with map data, speed, journey length etc

**Cool feature:** Choose recording length, and option to continuously loop over that time; could prove your innocence post-crash

**Usability:** 'Save this video' function didn't work... Fix coming, we're told. It's a 7/10 when it does. Until then...

**Rating:** 2/10





# Does it work?

## The mirrorless saloon



**T**HEY'RE THE BANE of car designers' working lives, door mirrors that 'Dumbo' would be ashamed of. EU legislation demands the driver's door mirror should provide a 20m x 4m rearward view, in addition to the interior mirror's extensive visibility. But side mirrors can increase drag by 6%, ratcheting up emissions and penalising economy, calculates the Motor Industry Research Association.

But help might be at hand. 'We can replace them with cameras; they're just an unnecessary regulation,' insists Infiniti London design director Simon Cox. And systems supplier Continental has spent the last 15 months developing prototype mirror-less technology using three high-resolution cameras: one on each front door replacing the conventional mirrors, and a third, roof-mounted one in the base of the 'bee sting' aerial.

In Continental's system, each camera has a 65° view, overlapping one another to give a full 180° image of what's happening behind you. Fitted to a Mercedes S-class, Continental has reconfigured the facia

to house a trio of 7.7-inch Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) high-resolution screens, one each at the base of the A-post and a centrally mounted screen that can be configured by the driver to display one, two or three views. This is augmented by the S-class's own 12-inch TFT monitor.

Wind-tunnel testing revealed between a 3% and 5% improvement in drag, resulting in a CO<sub>2</sub> reduction of up to 3g/km and a 3% fuel economy uplift.

Continental is working on future iterations that include projecting the images onto a Head-Up Display, or into the instrument binnacle using high-resolution, configurable monitors similar to that in the latest Audi TT. Images could sit between the speedo and tachometer.

Of course, the mirrorless car idea isn't new: it's appeared on myriad concept cars including Lexus's 2005 LFA concept, which featured horn-like cameras on the A-posts. But soon it could be for real: if the approval of these camera-monitor systems goes through as planned in 2016, the systems could be in use by 2018.

**IAN ADCOCK**

### 4 reflections on mirrorless cars



1

#### YOUR A-POST EYES

Bye bye door mirrors, hello discreet cameras that enhance rearward vision, reduce drag and cabin noise



2

#### 'MIRRORS' MOVE INSIDE

The principle is the same: the backwards view down one side is relayed on screens adjacent to where the mirrors once were



3

#### VISUAL OVERKILL

Side mirror views are repeated on central screens, and you can add the central view behind: it's too much!

4

#### THE UPSIDE

Binning the mirrors boosts economy by 3%. They're said to boost visibility at night, in glaring sun and poor weather

### DID IT WORK?

**Yes...**

There's a lot to take in, and some drivers will find it overwhelming at first. Configuring the correct amount of info is critical. But going mirrorless certainly worked in the safe haven of a test track



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MY15 Avensis Excel 2.0 D-4D 5dr Touring Sports. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 47.9 (5.9), Extra Urban 68.9 (4.1), Combined 58.9 (4.8). CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 124g/km. The mpg & CO<sub>2</sub> figures quoted are sourced from official EU regulated test results. These are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. Model shown is MY15 Avensis Excel 2.0 D-4D 5dr Touring Sports at £28,440. Price excludes Orion Blue paint at £495. Prices correct at time of going to press. \*0% APR Representative available on new retail orders of MY15 Avensis when ordered between 1 June and 30 September 2015 and registered and financed through Toyota Financial Services by 31 December 2015 on a 24 month AccessToyota (PCP) plan with 0-32% deposit. <sup>^</sup>Payment shown is based on a 24 month AccessToyota contract with £8,727.99 customer deposit and Guaranteed Future Value/Optional Final Payment. Toyota Financial Services (UK) PLC. Registered Office: Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, Surrey KT18 5UZ. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Indemnities may be required. Finance subject to status to over 18s. Other finance offers are available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. Excess miles over 16,000 charged at 12p per mile. Toyota Centres are independent of Toyota Financial Services. Terms and conditions apply. Affordable finance through AccessToyota. 5 year/100,000 mile manufacturer warranty subject to terms and conditions.



## TECH.

# Braking good!

## How Continental's brake-by-wire revolution works

Shorter stopping distances, less weight and pedal feel you can set

**BRAKING SYSTEMS ARE** about to take the next leap forward as full brake-by-wire (BBW) systems go into series production at the end of this year. Continental's fourth-generation system, the MKC1, takes only 100 milliseconds to build up 400bar brake pressure compared with 700 milliseconds in the previous mechanical system, resulting in dramatically shorter braking distances with the potential of reducing impacts with other road users and pedestrians.

And it goes almost without saying that the system is smaller, lighter and more energy efficient with a marginal reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>.



1

### Integrated brake system

The MKC1 combines the traditional vacuum booster, electric or mechanical pump – that supplies energy to the booster – and the control unit for ABS and ESC into one compact unit, saving more than 9lb in weight and freeing up 0.14 cubic feet of valuable packaging space under the bonnet. Continental says it will cost 'a little bit more' initially, but this will decrease as volumes rise. Also, when the upsides – reduced CO<sub>2</sub> and weight, increase in performance and improved comfort levels through noise reduction – are taken into account the cost is comparable, engineers claim.

2

### Full brake-by-wire

The driver has no direct link between the brake pedal and the calipers. In a standard system when a driver applies the brakes, hydraulic pressure builds up; with BBW the 600-watt brushless DC electric motor does this internally and pedal feel is simulated to avoid abrupt stops or annoying 'nodding dog' effect. Continental says that in the future drivers will be able to select their preference from a range of options, from a short pedal feel for sporty driving to a longer one in comfort mode.

*We tried brake-by-wire on a Focus. It's potent, but you'll still hit the dummy if you miss your braking point*



4

### Reduced CO<sub>2</sub>

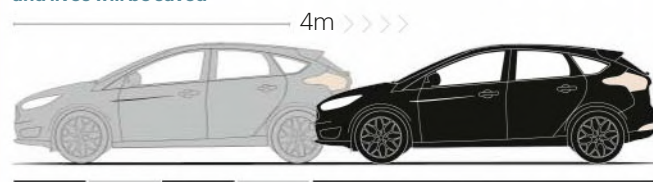
As well as saving weight, the MKC1 allows a bigger gap between the calipers and the brake discs, which helps to reduce residual torque in the system and save fuel. Additionally, because of the faster response time, the calipers don't have to be pre-loaded in anticipation of an emergency stop, so brake feel remains constant during sustained heavy braking.

3

### Upping the pressure

Because the 400bar line pressure is achieved in only 100 milliseconds instead of the 700 of a conventional system, stopping distances are greatly reduced taking out 2.5 metres from 30mph. That progression is almost linear as velocity increases, so at 40mph it's more like 4.0 metres. The faster you go, the greater the distance saved under emergency braking.

This isn't tech for tech's sake. Stopping distances are cut, and lives will be saved







## BE ONE WITH IT

Be one with your tyres, and the road will be one with you.



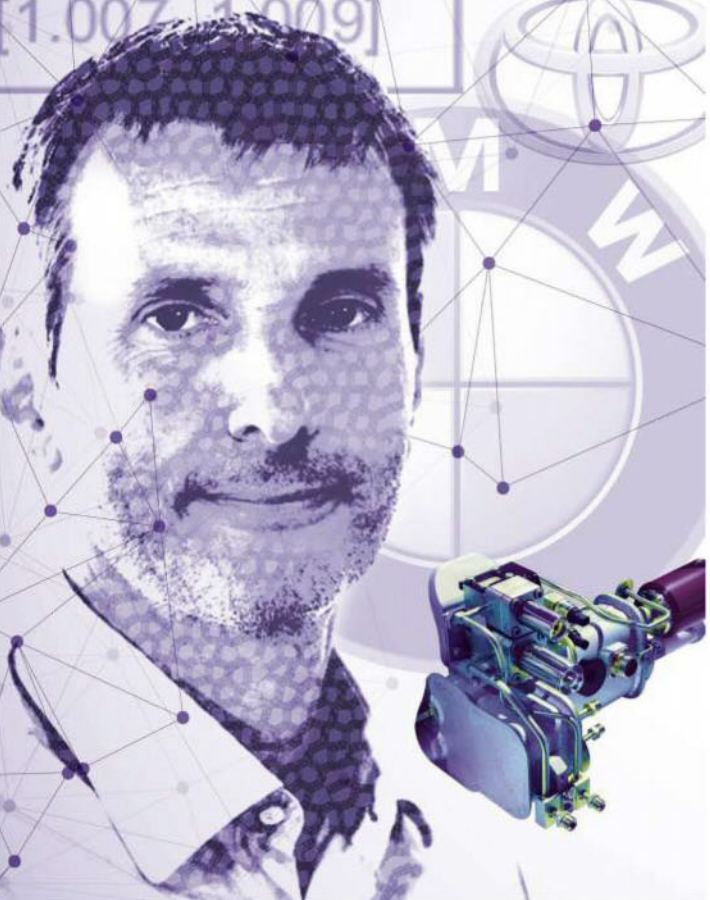
### ventus S1 evo<sup>2</sup>

#### Luxury that never compromises safety

With an advanced VAI system that allows drivers to track vehicle alignment and aerodynamic sidewalls that minimise noise and vibration levels, the ventus S1 evo<sup>2</sup> delivers the promise of performance and enhanced fuel efficiency.







# The next big things

## by BMW's powertrain guru

Matthias Kietz, powertrain research VP, tells *CAR* why rumours of hydrogen's death as a future fuel couldn't be more wrong

**B**Y 2020 BMW will have a fully operational hydrogen powertrain ready for production, and soon Germany and Japan will have the infrastructure to make it viable...

> **'People often** ask why BMW stopped developing hydrogen technology, but we never did; we have been working on it constantly for 30 years. Small-to-medium-sized battery-electric vehicles are ideal for urban use, and plug-in hybrids can be used across the range to cover all driving conditions. Hydrogen offers zero emissions and very high levels of energy storage, so it's ideal for longer ranges of up to 440 miles and larger vehicles. Eventually, fuel-cells will be cheaper than battery-electric vehicles.

> **The need** for hydrogen is not only driven by zero-emissions vehicles, it's essential so we can store renewable energy. After Fukushima, Germany decided to phase out nuclear power, and has a renewable-energy target of 50% by 2030. This will result in fluctuating energy supply, but we can capture this energy and store it as liquid hydrogen. It will be an electricity buffer for Germany, and ideal as a vehicle fuel.

> **BMW has** developed a cryogenic hydrogen storage system. 7.1kg of hydrogen stored cryogenically at 350 bar gives up to 440 miles of range in three-to-four minutes, compared with

4.5kg stored at 700 bar for 280 miles' range. Cryogenic hydrogen is stored at -220degC, but the hose is insulated, so you don't feel the cold.

> **Europe should** look to Asia: Japan and South Korea in particular view hydrogen as the next big technology, it's a good indicator that you can make a business case. In Germany we have 50 stations, aiming for 400 by 2023; Japan has 100 stations, with 800 planned for 2025. Asia will be a driving force for hydrogen storage.

> **We are** collaborating with Toyota to accelerate development, share expertise and cut costs, and it's important for international standardisation: there are too many connectors for battery-electric cars, and it's confusing for the consumer. In the prototype hydrogen fuel-cell 5-series GT, the fuel cell is from Toyota, the fuel-cell housing from BMW, fuel-cell auxiliaries from both companies, and the hydrogen tank, electric drive and high-voltage battery from BMW. At the moment it is about 100kg heavier than a normal 5GT, but we are at the very beginning, and we expect substantial savings.

> **There's no** decision on a production vehicle, but we want our components to be production-ready by 2020. The total switchover from combustion engine to fuel cell is 20 years away, minimum.'

**BEN BARRY**

## FRESH THINKING: Tesla Energy

### Now they want to power your home too!

#### What is Tesla Energy?

It's billed as a way of weaning the world off fossil fuels (pretty unambitious, huh?). Basically it's a rechargeable home battery pack that you stick on the wall of your house (hence it's called Powerwall), which allows you to store energy and use it as

you need it. **Hang on, isn't Tesla a car (and occasional rocket) maker?** So you may have thought, but no – it describes itself as 'an energy innovation company' with a mission to enable zero-emission power generation. **Zero emission?**

#### Where does the power to charge your home battery come from?

Ideally from self-generated solar power, but it can be connected to the grid, meaning you can charge it in low-rate periods and use it at high-rate hours. Works as a back-up when the grid goes down, too.

#### What's the tech behind this?

Powerwall is a lithium-ion battery pack (rated at 7 or 10kWh), with a liquid thermal control system, and software paired with a solar inverter. Looks like a sort of funky boiler.

#### Coming soon?

This summer in the US, at \$3500 a pop.



Tesla now makes your car and runs your heating. It also tidies your garage by the look of it



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**RED & BLACK SPECIAL EDITIONS**  
➤ With the new 1.0L 140PS EcoBoost engine

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The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

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# FIRST DRIVES.



11 cars tested, starring Jaguar Project 7, Merc GLE Coupe, Boxster Spyder, Mazda CX-3, Vauxhall Viva vs rivals & more

## JAGUAR F-TYPE PROJECT 7

# Jaguar sells out by not selling out

This is a car for Le Mans legends, not oligarchs or rappers, and all 250 are sold. How true is Project 7 to the Mike Hawthorn spirit?



**R**OOF DOWN, crackling V8 ricocheting off rock faces, we climb higher up the mountain pass as drizzle shifts to downpour. In any normal F-type convertible, you'd press a button to put three layers of insulation between elements and hairstyle. Not in Project 7, a limited-run F-type that honours Jag's seven Le Mans victories, and ditches electric roof for Bimini soft-top.

This manual roof contributes to an 85kg weight saving and enables the cool new D-type-aping rear bodywork, but is as easy to erect as a ten-man tent in a hurricane. Get caught in a downpour and you can stop and battle it into place, or you can hope high-speed aerodynamics keep you dry. What would Hawthorn do? He'd pull an aluminium gearshift paddle, unleash all 567bhp and throw caution to the *viento*. Rude – and slightly inconvenient – not to.

Two years ago, the Project 7 concept charged about at Goodwood, tyre smoke clearing to reveal frantically waving chequebooks. Then design director Ian Callum announced this even

sexier F-type was all a big tease. Waving of larger chequebooks ensued, and now we're driving the production car. Just 250 are being built, the £135k tag representing a £43k premium over the V8 R Convertible. All are sold.

Project 7 is the first Jaguar to receive the Special Vehicle Operations treatment, the performance division tasked with doing for Jaguar Land Rover what AMG does for Mercedes. It starts when a V8 R Convertible is whisked from the Castle Bromwich production line to SVO at Ryton. There, the new composite upper rear bodywork and roof are fitted, along with a windscreen that's some 114mm shorter and matched to new side windows. It's neatly judged: the cabin feels more open, you get just the right amount of feelgood bluster and can still chat at motorway speeds, while even taller drivers don't get an eyeful of header rail.

If little seems to have changed between concept and production, the reality is much different. The single-seater concept becomes a more practical two-seater design with a lower drag fairing behind the driver's head, and – crucially – all manner of mechanical fettling backs up the visual promise.

The supercharged V8 is boosted from the F-type R's 542bhp to 567bhp, torque increasing from 461lb ft to 516lb ft, so it's probably wise that the R's optional carbon-ceramic brakes are thrown in free. There's a revised map for the electrically assisted steering and transmission, re-valved adaptive dampers, and new 20-inch Continental ForceContact tyres promise a blend of wet-weather performance with increased dry-weather grip and precision – they deliver, but I suspect SVO could have gone more aggressive in the search for grip. You'll also find new anti-roll bars front and rear, revised top mounts, and suspension knuckles that increase negative camber from 0.5 to 1.5 degrees. Perhaps most intriguingly, the spring rates are upped by a massive 80% at the front, but just 8% at the rear, and Jaguar claims new carbonfibre knick-knacks increase downforce by 91% at 186mph.

↓  
**Swoopy, D-type-alike rear deck and fairing made from carbonfibre. Racing green paintjob virtually mandatory**

We're driving Project 7 on roads near Pamplona, Spain, and *Circuit de Navarra*. Suffice to say there's still plenty of suspension ▶







When the rain comes forget the fiddly roof. Just drive faster

compliance, the lightweight sports seats blend both comfort and support, and there's nothing to suggest Project 7 is tiresome as a daily driver, fiddly roof excepted. With garages stuffed like a Quality Street jar, though, you suspect Project 7 owners will accept a little compromise, and it's up in the mountains, driving for kicks, that this car's strengths magnify.

There's a real hunger to everything you ask of Project 7: steering inputs, throttle, braking, gear changes, the way it piles on speed and changes direction, how the suspension's transition from unloaded to loaded seems more progressive.

The lower weight, extra power and eight auto ratios stacked like pancakes generate an excess of performance, the mid-range offering massive flexibility, the top end staying full-bodied to the redline. After its rather introvert incarnations in the XKR and XFR, the 5.0-litre supercharged V8 now boasts one of the best soundtracks you can treat your lugs to; it rips, spits and crackles down the road, and sounds so audaciously fruity that you often press the quiet button for fear of pre-alerting the cops.

SVO's Paul Newsome, ex-Williams F1, says his

team has tried to tame some of the chassis' more extrovert tendencies, however. In the wet, this obviously remains a very throttle-sensitive machine, but both mechanical traction and the leniency of the mid-way stability-control setting enables you to drive up a road wearing lead boots without creating either too much trepidation or intervention. Turn all the safety stuff off and the fear factor ramps up, but this remains an inherently well-balanced, playful car, but one that also feels keener to self-straighten in a slide than the R. It gives a greater feeling of control over the angles you can still easily generate.

As ever, you can choose between Normal and Dynamic modes, which have default settings or can be individually configured: dampers, steering, throttle, transmission, all can be twiddled, but this time there's a deeper personality rift between the two. Normal is well optimised for the road with its still-generous compliance, and the easy-twirling steering does, nonetheless, have more weight – there's some particularly fulsome definition over the first few degrees of movement – while the alcantara rim and, perhaps, firmer chassis increase the fizz of feel. Normal is also the place where throttle and transmission feel happiest: so intuitive you're rarely inclined to drop out of D.

Dynamic works on the road, but the suspension can feel very spiky in town, and the throttle and transmission calibration become a little giddy. On *Circuit de Navarra*, though, it all gels. The gear shifts feel incisive, the weightier steering confidence-inspiring without adding that glutinous secret ingredient the Germans adore, and the stiffer springs bring extra composure. Above all, Project 7 is a hell of a lot of fun, the kind of car that amateurs and experts alike can reel off high-speed laps in.

A few things stick out in particular: the firmer

front springs bring an incredible level of stability to the rear during heavy braking, but also introduce a little extra understeer to high-speed cornering – still easily cancelled with a tickle of throttle, though.

There's no problem slowing Project 7 down – it takes serious recalibration to realise how deep you can go into a corner and how hard you can stand on the ceramic brakes – or getting it turned in to slower corners, it's just getting the power down on the way out. With an edgy throttle in Dynamic and so much torque on tap from just 3500rpm, you can choose between waiting it out in second gear or short-shifting into third, neither of which are particularly satisfying. Again, that mid-way stability control does a good job of managing your clumsiness, but I'd vote less torque or more traction or both.

I enjoyed driving Project 7 immensely, but there's still a gap between it and how I'd spec the ultimate driver's F-type. That's something with a closed roof, lower weight, stickier tyres, more low-speed traction and even greater tactility, a Jaguar to go 911 GT3 chasing. Newsome says the upcoming F-type SVR will be all-wheel drive to battle 911 Turbo, a car that outsells the GT3 four-to-one. But when they've put the depth of design and engineering nous into just 250 Project 7s, you suspect there's a middle ground to be tapped. Newsome, tellingly, refuses to rule out a higher performance rear-drive model. Take your chequebook to next year's Goodwood, just in case.

**BEN BARRY** @lamBenBarry

## Jaguar F-type Project 7

► **Price** £135,000 ► **Engine** 5000cc 32v supercharged V8, 567bhp @ 6500rpm, 516lb ft @ 3500rpm ► **Transmission** Eight-speed auto, rear-wheel drive ► **Performance** 3.9sec 0-62mph, 186mph (limited), 26.4mpg, 255g/km ► **Weight** 1620kg ► **On Sale** Now – but sold out

## UP AGAINST

### BETTER THAN

Jaguar V8 R Convertible

### WORSE THAN

Aston V12 Vantage Roadster

### WE'D BUY

Aston V12 Vantage Roadster



### LOVE

Design, sound, performance, handling

### HATE

Still not the ultimate driver's F-type

### VERDICT

Great fun, could be sharper yet

★★★★★



They've tamed some of the V8 F-type's wilder chassis tendencies. Still lairy, but keener to get you out of a slide



## MERCEDES BENZ GLE COUPE

# Merc commits daylight blobbery

You can blame BMW's X6 for this, but you can't blame it for the GLE's errant body control. Very strange indeed

**T**HE THING ABOUT the BMW X6 is that although it arrived to a chorus of incredulity so loud several canaries dropped dead of heart failure, once driven this initial cacophony was drowned out by the collective thud of jaws hitting the floor. The looks were not the accidental repercussion of an X5 barrel-rolling into a field after all! The chassis proving so accomplished that such an accident immediately became inconceivable.

While this means the X6 never had the opportunity to test the theory that you could stick a BMW badge on a barge and it would still sell (subsequently disproved by the 5-series GT?), its showroom performance has finally received the official car industry mark of approval: a rival. Enter the Mercedes GLE Coupe, which unfortunately turns out not to offer any similar handling-based justification for its existence.

GLE is the new name for the M-class, and the GLE Coupe is one of those with its rear roofline lopped off. Following a

comprehensive styling makeover, the result – longer, lower and wider than the regular GLE – is akin to a CLA that's been repurposed as a monster truck, possibly by an artier member of the team behind *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

If you're thinking two generations of X6 will have prepared the general public for this kind of mischief, let me disabuse you. To travel in a GLE Coupe is to leave a sea of perplexity in your wake – and from bikers to OAPs, the expressions say 'Dude, what are you driving?' Though to be fair, some of the shock and awe (let's be kind and call it awe) should be attributed to the sound of the AMG versions.

There are two of these – the full-on fire-breathing 577bhp GLE63 S biturbo V8 and the 362bhp GLE450, powered by the new 'AMG Sport' biturbo V6 that's intended as a sort of Affalterbach gateway drug. Both make enough outrageously inappropriate noises to cause spontaneous giggling, and both will be comprehensively out-sold by

the GLE350d, a 254bhp V6 turbodiesel destined for 80% of UK customers.

The engines do all the necessary with aplomb; it's the chassis that's questionable. Even the 63, loaded with active anti-roll technology in addition to the range-wide air suspension and adaptive damping, struggles to control the evident bulk. As you pitch and corkscrew through the turns, you find yourself fantasising about that benchmark Bavarian, not to mention the Porsche Cayenne. Perhaps Mercedes has calculated the target audience cares more for a cushy ride on massive wheels – an astonishing 21 inches is the UK *minimum* – than maintaining gimble-like equilibrium while escaping to the country.

Either way, you'd have to really love the exterior to overlook the tablet-style infotainment screen and Dynamic Select controller – a Terrain Response knock-off governing on-road behaviour – which seem too cheap and plasticky to grace the interior of a £60k+ Lifestyle Utility Vehicle. The X6 may be ugly, but at least it's got heroic character; the GLE Coupe isn't so much *Mad Max* as Mr Blobby.

**CJ HUBBARD** @ir\_427

### Mercedes GLE450 AMG Coupe

**Price** £62,800 **> Engine** 2996cc 24v twin-turbo V6, 362bhp @ 5500-6000rpm, 383lb ft @ 1800-4000rpm **> Transmission** Nine-speed automatic, four-wheel drive **> Performance** 5.7sec 0-62mph, 155mph (limited), 31.7mpg, 209g/km CO2 **> Weight** 2220kg **> On Sale** July 2015



Remember that break-in at Land Rover's parts department where they said nothing was taken? Just saying...

The X6 looks odd but drives and handles like a demon. The GLE looks odd but drives and handles like a jelly



**LOVE**  
What the hell – the striking appearance

**HATE**  
Poor body control, cheap bits inside

**VERDICT**  
And you thought the X6 was difficult to love?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER

# Thou shalt not covet

But of course that advice pre-dated the arrival of the new Porsche Spyder, the fastest, lightest, prettiest Boxster yet

**Y**OU CHECK THE price (£60,459), ascertain that despite appearances the Boxster Spyder is not a convertible Cayman GT4 and think no, you don't need one. After all, who drives a Boxster GTS and finds it lacking? £7k saved by a little iron-willed resolve. Well done. And good luck...

Cracks start to appear when you consider the engine. Out goes the GTS's 3.4-litre six. In comes the Carrera S-sourced 3.8 that made its mid-engine debut in the GT4 Cayman. Power is 10bhp down on the über-Cayman but the waters between the GTS Boxster and the Spyder are clear and expansive: 326bhp and 273lb ft of torque versus the 3.8's 370bhp and 310lb ft. Ah. Consider also that this engine is equally responsive, free revving and aurally wondrous. Gear ratios are as per the GTS, PDK is not an option and the Spyder enjoys the same shorter, stubbier lever as the Cayman GT4. If there's a sweeter manual transmission, one as accurate and as profoundly satisfying to use, it's living in a cave somewhere without a Facebook page.

The Spyder's not about numbers but ponder for a moment 0-62mph in 4.5 seconds and 180mph. With the 3.8 motor the Boxster climbs a rung, from fast to very fast. 1315kg is another significant figure, for not only is the Spyder the punchiest Boxster yet it's also the lightest, undercutting the 1345kg GTS by the equivalent of half a passenger

(messy). The Spyder's soft-top saves 11kg over the Boxster's powered hood – ample reward for the manual labour required. Deploying or stashing it is a sub-minute job, once you've been shown The Way. Further weight's been saved by going without PASM suspension (5kg), some sound deadening (5kg) and, as standard, air-con (9kg), though this can be optioned back in without charge. A Chapman-esque fervour for the banishment of flab runs to the interior too, with its deeply handsome, comfortable and supportive shell-backed carbon buckets and fabric-loop door releases – cute.

Where the Cayman GT4 was a Porsche GT project, developed under Andreas Preuninger with chassis componentry from the (presumably ultra-lightweight and sweet-steering) GT3 parts bin, the Boxster Spyder is a mainstream model developed by Cayman/Boxster boss Stefan Weckbach and his team. The Spyder rides on the Boxster's optional Sport suspension with a softer rear anti-roll bar. The brakes are 911-sourced: six-piston front calipers and 340mm discs as opposed to the GTS's four-piston calipers

## UP AGAINST

### BETTER THAN

#### Alfa Romeo 4C Spider

The difference between potential and actual brilliance

### WORSE THAN

#### Porsche Cayman GT4

...if you're shooting for a hot 'Ring lap

### WE'D BUY

#### Porsche Boxster Spyder

Shorn of options, as intended

and 330mm discs.

Any disappointment at the lack of GT4 Cayman underpinnings lasts only as long as it takes to get behind the wheel. Jump in, marvel at the essential rightness of everything from the weighting of the pedals to the anatomy of the seats, start the engine and prod your way almost immediately into Sport Plus (for more slip-angle freedom, rev-matched downshifts and increased exhaust volume). What follows is an enthralling, wholly immersive driving experience that takes the Boxster's fundamental brilliance and glosses it with yet more layers of dynamic excellence and driving joy.

Yes, the gearing still feels tall, even with the stronger engine,

The air may not be conditioned but it rushes through your hair

We shouldn't be seduced by such fripperies as speedster humps, but...





Lightest Boxster yet feels as delicate and precise as you'd hope. Manual 'box so perfect we'd like to marry it, but sadly it's already married to a peachy flat-six



RICHARD PARDON

and if you press the car into daily service you will miss the duality and versatility of a Boxster equipped with PASM and PDK, but the Spyder is an exceptional sports car. Even at low speeds you appreciate the gearshift, the smooth, tractable engine and the admirable suspension pliancy – the set-up is firm but, given the size of wheels, far from intolerable. Press on and the last vestiges of your anti-Spyder resolve will likely crumble in the face of furious acceleration, the engine's incredibly eager and accurate throttle response, the centre-exit exhausts' utterly bewitching soundtrack (complete with filthy pops and gurgles on the overrun) and tirelessly strong brakes. Corners, however tricky, fall without a fight to the keen, slack-free steering and the chassis' endlessly fascinating blend of poise, grip and adjustability.

The final blow. Objectively the visual changes over the GTS Boxster amount to little more than the GT4 Cayman's rump and nose (with a smaller chin spoiler, to balance reduced downforce at the rear), Spyder-specific wheels and the bespoke roof and rear deck, complete with streamlined Speedster humps. Subjectively the effect is pretty special, elevating the already handsome Boxster to something altogether more purposeful, a hunkered, elegant form that at once references the past (the 550 and 718 Spyderys, naturally, with shades of Carrera GT) without getting mired in retro.

How's that resolve holding up?

**BEN MILLER**

#### Porsche Boxster Spyder

- > **Price** £60,459
- > **Engine** 3800cc 34v flat-six, 370bhp @ 6700rpm, 310lb ft @ 4750-6000rpm
- > **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
- > **Performance** 0-62mph 4.5sec, 180mph, 28.0mpg, 230g/km CO2
- > **Weight** 1315kg
- > **On sale** Now

#### LOVE

Heritage, balance, performance, mood-lifting brilliance

#### HATE

UK climate, oh-so perfectly pitched price/performance/desirability premium

#### VERDICT

As worthy of your unabashed affection as the hysterically good Cayman GT4

★★★★★

## BMW 2-SERIES GRAN TOURER

# As in a tourer bought by grans

**F**UNNILY ENOUGH, BMW reckons quite a few of this car's buyers will actually be grans, as it predicts a significant

proportion of customers to be 'silver surfers' with grandchildren to cart around. Catholic ones, presumably, because the Gran Tourer is the stretched version of the Active Tourer, longer of wheelbase, higher of roof and with seven seats as standard.

It's still relatively compact on the outside, actually a mite shorter than a 3-series Touring, and as a result it's not quite as voluminous on the inside as more dedicated family holdalls such as Picasso, Galaxy and co. Though it's still practical enough, the BMW's real trump cards are its business class interior decor and its driving dynamics. Despite the extra bulk over the Active Tourer, it still corners flatter and changes direction better than a people carrier has any right to. It's almost fun, even. There's a trade-off, though: a ride firm enough to push the boundaries of what's appropriate for a people carrier, even on the optional adaptive dampers.

While the majority of the range is front-wheel-drive and offers thrifty 3-cyl motors, the nicest is the 4wd, 4-cyl, 295lb ft 220d xDrive. Mind you, the optioned-up one we drove veered close to £40k. Absurd money for an MPV, whichever way you slice it. But it does at least feel expensive, and while it's a car that will be bought by some purely for its badge, it's one good enough for them to convincingly pretend otherwise.

**JAMES TAYLOR** @JamesTaylor\_5

#### BMW 2-series Gran Tourer 220d xDrive M Sport

- > **Price** £32,005
- > **Engine** 1995cc 16v 4-cyl turbodiesel, 187bhp @ 4000rpm, 295lb ft @ 1750rpm
- > **Transmission** Eight-speed auto, four-wheel drive
- > **Performance** 7.8sec 0-62mph, 135mph, 57.6mpg, 129g/km CO2
- > **Weight** 1615kg
- > **On sale** Now
- > **Rating** ★★★★★

**VERDICT** An MPV that handles brilliantly. Skewed priorities?

'I remember when BMWs were rwd and this was all fields,' etc





Ford subscribes to the Big MPV Theory, which is how the Galaxy came to be formed

## FORD GALAXY

# A Galaxy not far far away from S-Max

Ford already has one seven-seater, so why reprise its even bigger MPV? The truth, hopefully, is out there

**O**N THE FACE of it, this, the third-generation Ford Galaxy, seems a bit redundant. After all, the equally brand-new S-Max with which the Galaxy shares its platform not only costs slightly less, but still seats seven, looks sleeker and is set up to drive sharper, too. Why would you bother? Poetically enough, though, the Galaxy is all about space. It tops the same Mondeo-sourced underpinnings with a blockier body than the 'Max, prioritising roominess over pseudo-sportiness. This is a seven-seater that can actually seat seven adults.

With the second row of separate seats slid and tilted via reassuringly robust-feeling and smooth-running mechanisms, it's still a bit of a hop, skip and a jump to get to the rearmost row

but once you're in there's genuinely decent shoulder and knee room. Moving forwards, the middle row feels borderline agoraphobic as the Galaxy continues to shun sliding doors to allow maximum elbow-wagging room. Drop all five rear seats (via electric switches in the boot – spec the optional Family Pack and you can raise the final pair remotely too) and there are cargo ship levels of carrying capacity. Fold only the final two and there's still plenty of luggage-squashing space, with built-in overlapping covers to help avoid losing smaller bits of shopping/pets/children down the gaps between the seats.

Up front, you actually sit slightly lower than in an S-Max, enabling a more exaggeratedly tiered seating plan front to rear for a better view out, ahead of a grown-up-feeling (if perhaps slightly plain) dash, with a touchscreen embedded as standard in the centre console. You also sit behind a wheel that's connected to a very responsive, almost oversensitive, power steering setup with that pleasing sense of precision that current Ford models do quite well. Like the S-Max, the Galaxy employs MacPherson strut front, independent rear suspension to good effect with a largely well-cushioned ride, although smaller surface imperfections can thump through the chassis a little too readily. Perhaps the greatest



Space, the vinyl frontier (or space, the leather frontier in top models)

compliment the Galaxy earns is that it seems smaller than it really is on the road, feeling far wieldier than a big MPV should.

Of the broad spread of petrol and diesel engines available (the former including a 237bhp 2.0-litre capable of propelling the Galaxy to an improbable 140mph, and some of the latter with the option of 4wd), we were given the 177bhp 2.0-litre TDCi, which sits towards the top of the diesel range tree. Moving the Galaxy's bulk around without difficulty, it was smooth enough but, more impressively, library-quiet. However much sound insulation Ford's crammed in, it's done the job. In fact, the MkIII Galaxy seems a good job all round. As big-daddy MPVs go it's a well-executed one, with impressive cabin quality, vast interior space and far tidier handling than you'd expect. The S-Max will vastly outsell it, of course, but if you're the head of a big family (or a big taxi firm) the Galaxy deserves a space on your shortlist.

**JAMES TAYLOR** @JamesTaylor\_5

A shameless plug for Galaxy's all-round compatibility



## Ford Galaxy Titanium 2.0 TDCi 180

► **Price** £30,795 ► **Engine** 1997cc 16v 4-cyl turbodiesel, 177bhp @ 3500rpm, 258lb ft @ 2000-2500rpm ► **Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive ► **Performance** 9.8sec 0-62mph, 129mph, 56.5mpg, 129g/km CO2 ► **Weight** 1756kg ► **On Sale** Now

► **LOVE**  
Build quality, tidy handling, space

► **HATE**  
S-Max nearly as roomy, and more desirable

► **VERDICT**  
Space is still the final frontier

★ ★ ★ ★ ★





32 MILE  
ELECTRIC RANGE



148  
MPG



510 MILE  
COMBINED RANGE



44  
G/KM  
ULTRA LOW  
CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS



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PLUG-IN HYBRID

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1. Official EU MPG test figure shown as a guide for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. 2. 32 mile EV range achieved with full battery charge. 510 miles achieved with combined full battery and petrol tank. Actual range will vary depending on driving style and road conditions. 3. Domestic plug charge: 5 hours, 16 Amp home charge point: 3.5 hours, 80% rapid charge: 30mins. 4. Government subsidised charge points are available from a number of suppliers for a small fee - ask your dealer for more information. 5. Congestion Charge application required, subject to administrative fee. 6. 5% BIK compared to the average rate of 25%. 7. Prices shown include the Government Plug-in Car Grant and VAT (at 20%), but exclude First Registration Fee. Model shown is an Outlander PHEV GX4h at £33,399 including the Government Plug-in Car Grant and metallic paint. On The Road prices range from £28,304 to £40,054 and include VED, First Registration Fee and the Government Plug-in Car Grant. Metallic/pearlescent paint extra. Prices correct at time of going to print. For more information about the Government Plug-in Car Grant please visit [www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants](http://www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants). The Government Plug-in Car Grant is subject to change at any time, without prior notice. 8. All new Outlander PHEV variants come with a 5 year/62,500 mile warranty (whichever occurs first), for more information please visit [www.mitsubishi-cars.co.uk/warranty](http://www.mitsubishi-cars.co.uk/warranty)

Outlander PHEV range fuel consumption in mpg (ltrs/100km): Full Battery Charge: no fuel used, Depleted Battery Charge: 48mpg (5.9), Weighted Average: 148mpg (1.9), CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions: 44 g/km.





## MAZDA CX-3

# That's why mums go to Mazda

The school run won't be the only family endeavour that's freshened up by this bright new arrival at the SUV party

## UP AGAINST

## BETTER THAN

The slightly too soggy Renault Captur

## WORSE THAN

Mazda 3 makes more sense if you don't need a crossover

## WE'D BUY

One of these if only they'd ease up on the ride quality

**W**ITH THE MX-5's halo consistently bright enough to readily facilitate the Helix School Geometry Set compass-sponsored excavation of a verucca in a powercut (don't knock it 'til you've tried it), I've never quite understood why Mazda doesn't thrive more in the UK. There's now something of the spiffing in almost every model in the range, yet sales tick over at just below 50,000 units per annum.

Truth is, of course, lacking a production facility in Blighty (and, hence, relentlessly worked over by punitive exchange rates), disinterested in fleet discounting at the expense of profitability (just 30% of sales are to the fleet market) and no longer dangerously shackled to Ford, Mazda has been entirely happy with its status as a relatively compact, engineering-led outfit producing some 1.25 million cars each year.

However, punting a new contender into a fiercely competitive B-SUV segment pond already boiling with alternatives ranging from the prosaic to the premium is, surely, a clear indication that Mazda might now settle for shifting a few more...

The spread of segment rivals is lavish, encompassing everything from the likes of the Renault

Captur, Nissan Juke and Peugeot 2008 to pricier offerings such as Vauxhall's Mokka, that Fat Slag Mini variant and forthcoming nippers from the VW stable such as the Audi Q1.

With prices ranging from £17,595 to a daunting £24,695, where you slot the CX-3 into this list will depend on whether or not you buy into Mazda's protestation that standard equipment levels are so high at even entry level you'll quickly achieve price parity when kitting out most rivals to match. Safest to assume, though, that the CX-3 targets the premium end of the spectrum; not least because it certainly looks, and feels, the part.

This is definitely one of the classier interiors of its type: nicely made, leather-trimmed, largely good to touch. The front seats are comfortable and supportive and, with both seat-height and reach-and-rake steering adjustment, the

driving position's first class, even if the seat back needs turning knob rather than lever adjustment.

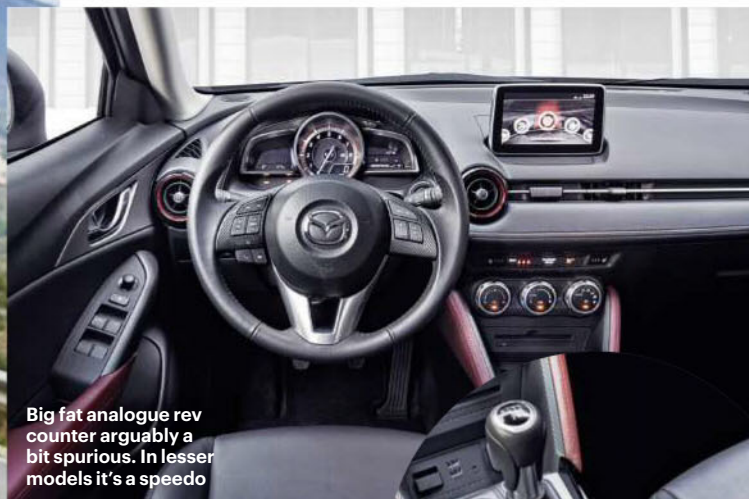
Indeed, my only real beef is with the instrument binnacle, and even that's model-dependent. High end, Sport Nav models boast an analogue rev counter with a digital speedometer inset. But lesser variants are equipped with an analogue speedometer and a diminutive LED rev counter in one of the binnacle side pods.

And this is significant not because you'll be watching the rev counter like a hawk, but because

Good-looking car, though the shoulder line is higher than a Sue Ellen two-piece. Saving on glass?







Big fat analogue rev counter arguably a bit spurious. In lesser models it's a speedo

said side pods are hard to read; the back-lighting isn't bright enough, and there's a lot of reflection off the covers.

All-wheel drive is available at the top of the CX-3 range, but it's the £19,595, front-wheel-drive, 118bhp SE-L Nav that's destined for best-selling status in the UK. Standard equipment is comprehensive, and includes air-conditioning, electric everything, sat-nav, a raft of safety features and a nicely intuitive multimedia system operated via a 7in touchscreen at speeds below 5mph, and a rotary dial thereafter.

In these days of tiny turbocharged engines powering behemoths in the interest of on-paper-only fuel and CO<sub>2</sub> miracles, it's pleasing that Mazda has shunned this approach in favour of added lightness allied to an under-stressed 2.0-litre unit that will sustain respectable cruising speeds at a gentle thrum. That said, this engine does have to be worked surprisingly hard through the gearbox to move 1230kg with anything approaching proper alacrity.

Happily, that's no chore, because the gearshift has an engaging throw and accuracy a mile away from, for instance, the gallows trapdoor release lever equipping the Cactus. It's only a shame that, in these days of direct injection, the engine doesn't sound as sweet as I'd hoped.

Nicely weighted steering boasts the feel and accuracy we've quietly come to expect of a Mazda, and the CX-3 acquits itself with a flat handling stance and a poise which is almost unseemly for this segment; the only downside being that ride quality is somewhat uncouth on even relatively unchallenging surfaces. This is the second family-orientated car I've driven in as many weeks wherein ride comfort has been sacrificed in the interests of removing the paint from the door handles at every corner (stand up Volvo XC90), and I still don't get the *raison d'être*. Mazda already has the MX-5 to put flies on your teeth, no need, surely, for the CX-3 to put flecks of puke on your toddler.

**ANTHONY FFRENCH-CONSTANT**



Love the manual gearbox - tight and accurate. Rotary dial channels iDrive logic, with impressive results

#### Mazda CX-3 SKYACTIV-G 120ps 2WD SE-L Nav

> **Price** £19,595  
> **Engine** 1998cc 16v 4-cylinder petrol, 118bhp @6000rpm, 150lb ft @ 2800rpm  
> **Transmission** 6-speed manual, front-wheel drive  
> **Performance** 9.0 sec 0-62mph, 119mph, 47.8mpg, 137g/km CO<sub>2</sub>  
> **Weight** 1230kg  
> **On Sale** Now

▶ **LOVE**  
Classy finishes, crisp driving

▶ **HATE**  
Instrument legibility, tough ride

▶ **VERDICT**  
Premium but pricey in a segment already spoiled for choice

★★★★★

## SSANGYONG TIVOLI

# How to erase the Rodius from history

**L**IKE A TENNIS novice continually serving up under-hit lobs to Novak Djokovic, Ssangyong has been repeatedly smashed by car reviewers. Its pit of poorly built, unlovable sheds has seemingly been bottomless, the pleasure of slating them in print being just reward for having had to drive them in the first place. The Rodius in particular was comedically, epically bad. But today we sound a trumpet: the new Tivoli is a very good car indeed.

Pitched at the increasingly populous compact SUV market also tilted at by Mazda's CX-3 (left), it offers absolutely loads of kit for very little cash, is fabulous inside, more than acceptable to drive and boasts a five-year unlimited mileage warranty.

As a value proposition the Tivoli is unarguable. Prices start at £12,950, and no matter how far you run riot with the options you can't spend more than £19,500 (that's a top-spec diesel with 4wd). We tested the 2wd £17k ELX, powered by a rather shy 126bhp 1.6 petrol engine that's absolutely fine for studied progress but crumbles like a biscuit when flummoxed by a heavy right foot. No matter. The ride is a little unpredictable but basically sound, the steering unusually hefty (especially in Sport mode) and the six-speed Aisin auto 'box understands how to soothe the torque-free engine.

The real magic, though, is inside. It's roomy front and back, nicely made (although our Red Leather Pack is a bit noisy), has a fresh, modern design and includes climate control, touchscreen sat-nav, keyless go, colour-configurable instruments, stop/start... And you can use 'My Tivoli' to tickle up the colour palette, roof included, Mini-style.

Okay, if Ssangyong is your fave Korean car maker then you probably thought Zeppo was the best Marx brother, Ringo the best Beatle. So what? The Tivoli simply doesn't feel like a budget car.

**GREG FOUNTAIN** @GregFountain1

#### Ssangyong Tivoli ELX 1.6 2wd

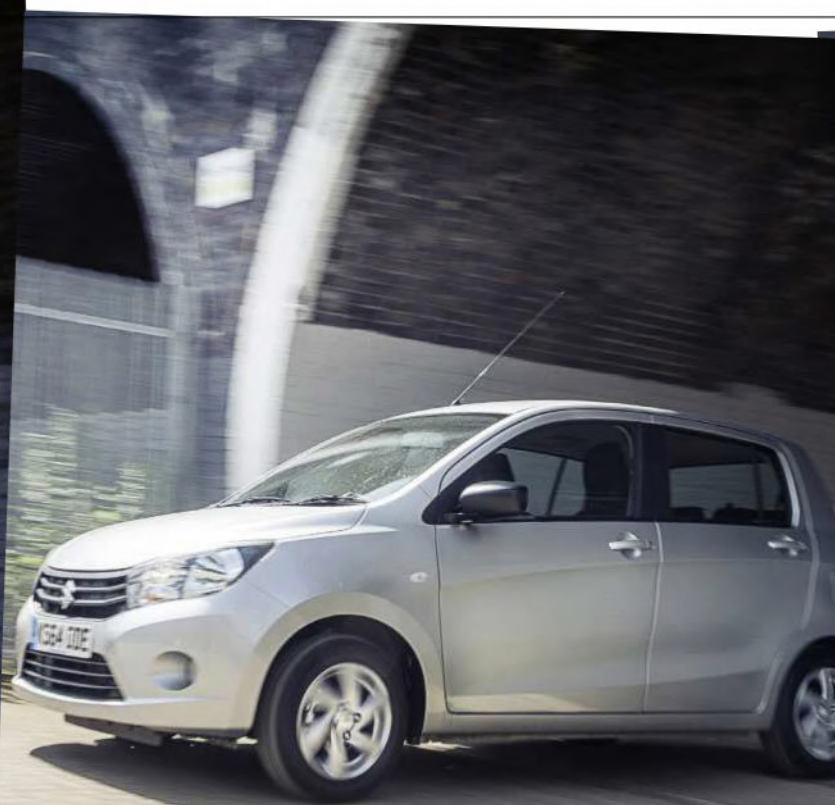
> **Price** £17,000 > **Engine** 1597cc 16v 4-cyl, 126bhp @ 6000rpm, 118lb ft @ 4600rpm > **Transmission** 6-speed auto, front-wheel drive  
> **Performance** 11.0sec 0-60mph, 99mph, 39.2mpg, 167g/km CO<sub>2</sub>  
> **Weight** 1300kg > **On sale** Now > **Rating** ★★★★★

**VERDICT** Genius for the fashion-immune

Ugly for a car, pretty for a Ssangyong, either way it's striking







# Viva returns to a changed city

It's 36 years since the last Vauxhall Viva, and this is a different world. Is the new mini-Griffin seriously taking on the budget micro-pack? **By Anthony French-Constant**

## Renault **Twingo**

### Plenty to choose from, so why this one?

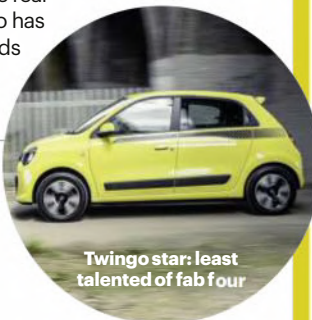
Despite having been trounced in every aspect of the packaging stakes by VW's Up, the rear-engined, rear-wheel-drive Twingo has been relentlessly garnering awards for its innovative packaging. Commence head scratching.

### Ostrich egg size presumably obviates style?

The sole un-burst compartment of the balloon animal extant the day after the birthday party. The only straight line available is on the rear shoulder; an irrelevant nod to another model altogether – the 5 Turbo.

### Tardis, or simply tight squeeze?

Nowhere to rest your clutch foot, and the demountable storage box in front of the gearlever saws away at your leg like a crazed Crimea battlefield surgeon. Least room in the back here, and a diminutive boot.



Twingo star: least talented of fab four

## Suzuki **Celerio**

### Plenty to choose from, so why this one?

Like the Viva a new kid on the block but, one suspects, destined for a very different customer base to that targeted by Vauxhall. Given Suzuki's past propensity for sharing small cars with Vauxhall, this should be interesting...

### Ostrich egg size presumably obviates style?

This is the box the Citigo came in. After a passable effort at frontal styling, the designers succumbed to the set-square. Still, that approach has worked for several decades of voluminous Volvo estates.

### Tardis, or simply tight squeeze?

Hilariously inferior quality plastics – unintelligible, given the élan with which Suzuki motorcycles are detailed. Acceptable driving position, and the most commodious rear seating here allied to rear doors that open wider than a medieval castle drawbridge.



Stick of Celerio: not to all tastes



'Living in a box under the railway bridge?'  
'No, just passing through in my new city car...'



## Skoda **Citigo**

### Plenty to choose from, so why this one?

Part of the VW group triumvirate that forced the A-segment to grow up, proving that small need no longer equate to My Little Pony build quality, funfair waltzer handling and equipment levels on a par with a housebrick.

### Ostrich egg size presumably obviates style?

The box that, despite its award-winning packaging, the Twingo won't fit into. Ignore the graffiti and this is as handsome as the Up from every angle but the front, where the latter's V8 Vantage blanking plate rules.



Citigo figure: why a chequered flag?

### Tardis, or simply tight squeeze?

The most mature offering here, both in terms of the quality of the environment and the comfort of the driving position. A whiff more rear legroom than the Twingo, and you can opt for four doors.

## Vauxhall **Viva**

### Plenty to choose from, so why this one?

A new kid on the A-segment block. Combining a 1.0-litre engine available in other small Vauxhalls with a dangerously iconic name (raising all sorts of hopes/fears based on 52 years of heritage), this has all the visual hallmarks of a Corsa left a tad too long in the boil wash.

### Ostrich egg size presumably obviates style?

The original, sharp-suited Viva made Ford Anglia and Morris Minor rivals look instantly geriatric. This is more instantly generic, and the poor thing's so creased it looks to have been dropped before it had set.



Viva pitch: it's not like the original

### Tardis, or simply tight squeeze?

Despite plastic- and chrome-heavy, stock Vauxhall finishes, the interior is tidy and comfortable. Good driving position, and room in the back for adult knees, despite rear door opening tighter than the mouth of a toddler threatened with castor oil.

CONTINUED...



CONTINUED...

## Renault Twingo

### Don't suppose you get many toys for this money?

Sort of; in as much as infotainment connectivity is reliant on your own phone, plus attendant dangling cable... System works satisfactorily, but is about as visually well integrated as a bowler hat on a seal.



No engine up front, yet still nowhere to rest your clutch foot

### Couldn't pull a muscle in a shellfish disco?

Thrumming across the 62mph line like a wounded bumble bee, the Twingo's 14.5-second dash makes it slower on the uptake than anything else here. A gearchange baggier than a clown's trousers doesn't help.

### Easier to live with than impetigo?

Actually just as irritating. Flawed driving position gangs up with other ergonomic glitches and brakes that wake with an unseemly start half way through the pedal travel to distract from tidy handling and the best ride quality here.

### Verdict

The original, first-generation Twingo remains the purest, best-looking and cleverest iteration of this car. Sorry, this one will never win an award from me.

## Suzuki Celerio

### Don't suppose you get many toys for this money?

Air-con, DAB radio, Bluetooth and a USB socket. Falls short of the pack on infotainment, but – she having only recently traded in her Suffragette-basketed bike for four wheels – provides everything the local midwife will require.



Loads of room in the rear for photographer taking this shot

### Couldn't pull a muscle in a shellfish disco?

Despite giving away 7bhp to the mighty Viva, this is the quickest car here. It's also the most vocal by some considerable chalk (in a grin-eliciting fashion), and feels the most eager to please.

### Easier to live with than impetigo?

With road and engine noise dominating, this is the least restful cabin here, not least because you'll need shades to take the shine off the dashboard plastics. Terrifyingly aggressive brakes will turn your terrier into a bonnet mascot.

### Verdict

Easily the most spacious offering here, and a drive that's just sufficiently alive to keep you interested. Fire the plastics department.



#### RENAULT TWINGO PLAY SCe 70

► Price £9995 ► Price as tested £10,585  
► Engine 999cc 12v 3-cyl, 69bhp @ 6000rpm, 67lb ft @ 2850rpm ► Gearbox 5-speed manual, rear-wheel drive ► Performance 14.5 sec 0-62mph, 94mph, 62.8mpg, 105g/km  
► Weight 864kg ► On sale Now ► Rating ★★★★★

#### SUZUKI CELERIO 1.0 SZ3

► Price £7999 ► Price as tested £8414  
► Engine 998cc 12v 3-cyl, 67bhp @ 6000rpm, 66lb ft @ 3500rpm ► Gearbox 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive ► Performance 13.1 sec 0-62mph, 96mph, 65.7mpg, 99g/km  
► Weight 835kg ► On sale Now ► Rating ★★★★★



## Skoda Citigo

### Don't suppose you get many toys for this money?

All Citigos from SE grade upwards get the dashtop-mounted Portable Infotainment Device – a euphemism for a neat little Garmin touchscreen tablet. And there's now a passenger window switch on the driver's door.



Most premium of the lot. Plastics almost not nasty

### Couldn't pull a muscle in a shellfish disco?

Only a tenth slower to 62mph than the Twingo despite deploying 10bhp less, the Citigo's triple-pot is the quietest and smoothest unit here, and is also mated to the sweetest gear change. Afford the 74bhp alternative.

### Easier to live with than impetigo?

Definitely. Though not the most spacious offering in the segment, this is easily finest interior environment on offer, and, with the Viva in hot pursuit, the most tidily resolved from a powertrain and driving dynamics perspective.

### Verdict

Still the leading pint-sized package, which others can only aspire to emulate. Forget the excruciating decals and go for the 5-door SE for £9485.

## Vauxhall Viva

### Don't suppose you get many toys for this money?

DAB radio, and the only car here boasting steering wheel mounted switchgear. But the Intellilink infotainment system pandering to the connectivity-crazed yooof who can't afford a brand new car is, bizarrely, not available until next year.



State-of-the-art connectivity... not available yet. Odd

### Couldn't pull a muscle in a shellfish disco?

In the land of butch, three-cylinder sewing machines, the baby Vauxhall's 74bhp should be king, rasping the Viva over the 60mph threshold like a handful of confetti, in just 13.1 seconds. But the mighty Celerio ruins the fun by being a fraction less slow.

### Easier to live with than impetigo?

Largely, yes. One of the more comfortable, quiet offerings here with decent rear-seat accommodation and boot space. Perfectly pleasant to drive, with light, accurate steering, good brakes and engaging, vice-free handling.

### Verdict

A solid effort which instantly humbles many who have been in the game for longer. Desperately needs proper infotainment right now, though.



### SKODA CITIGO MONTE CARLO 1.0 MPI

► Price £9995 ► Price as tested £10,585  
► Engine 999cc 12v 3-cyl, 59bhp @ 6000rpm, 70lb ft @ 3000-4300rpm ► Gearbox 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive ► Performance 14.4 sec 0-62mph, 99mph, 62.8mpg, 105g/km  
► Weight 1570kg ► On sale Now ► Rating ★★★★★

### VAUXHALL VIVA SE 1.0

► Price £7995 ► Price as tested £8490  
► Engine 999cc 12v 3-cyl, 74bhp @ 6500rpm, 70lb ft @ 4500rpm ► Gearbox 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive ► Performance 13.1 sec 0-60mph, 106mph, 62.8mpg, 104g/km  
► Weight 864kg ► On sale Now ► Rating ★★★★★



# Gavin Green

THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

'Triple Le Mans winner, boxer, powerboat racer, scratch golfer, racehorse breeder... Beat that, Lewis!'



**DUDLEY BENJAFIELD** and Bertie Kensington-Moir. Racing drivers with names like these deserve a closer look. Then there was Woolf Barnato – diamond millionaire, triple Le Mans winner, heavyweight boxer, powerboat racer, scratch golfer, racehorse breeder and wicketkeeper for Surrey in his spare time.

Was there ever a more compelling band of sporting brothers than the Bentley Boys? They drove hard (winning Le Mans five times), drank hard (Veuve Clicquot was apparently a favourite), partied energetically (the Savoy was used for one memorable post-race binge in '27) and – more than any individual vehicle or model, single race or marketing stunt – made Bentley the exceedingly British brand that it is today.

My favourite was Glen Kidston. Okay, the name was disappointingly non-Woosterish. His factual exploits, though, make Jean-Claude Van Damme's fictional adventures seem meek. The wealthiest of the bunch, Kidston could have spent his life quaffing Krug, pacing the links in his plus-fours and shooting grouse with expensive guns on expansive estates.

Instead, he survived two World War One torpedo sinkings, served with distinction on submarines, was a pioneer aviator, raced cars and bikes, won Le Mans with Barnato and was the sole survivor of a major air crash in '29 in which he nobly tried to rescue the injured while horribly burned (his clothes were still smoking when he flagged down a passing motorist). He was a renowned big game hunter and in '31 broke the flying record from the UK to Cape Town (6½ days in his Lockheed Vega monoplane). He never made it home. Flying over the Drakensberg mountains in South Africa, his plane broke up in a dust storm. Among those who mourned was Barbara Cartland, his former lover.

Lewis and Jenson: try to beat that!

A Bentley Boy even tried to save Bentley Motors from the financial abyss in the '20s. Barnato bankrolled Bentley and became chairman while poor old WO stayed on as his loyal underling. (All to no avail – Bentley went broke and fell into

the destructive clutch of rival Rolls-Royce, which systematically neutered it for the next 50 years, the sad denouement of which was putting Bentley badges on roly-poly Rollers).

Now Bentley – nourished on the unlikely bosom of the VW Group – is closer to its roots than probably any other British car maker. They make big, heavy, wildly fast, flamboyantly powerful, ostentatiously expensive, exquisitely furnished, hand-wrought, stately sporting cars that blend grandeur and haste. Just like they did in the '20s.

Nowadays, buyers include celebrity sportsmen, rappers, IT millionaires, models and movie stars. The Bentley Boys would empathise with this bunch of self-made strutters. Naturally, some modern Bentleys

tend to be ornately adorned, garish accoutrements to flamboyant owners. You and I may sniff at the mint green, shiny gold and banana yellow hues, bling meets zing. In fact, it's what many owners – swaggering sunflowers rather than shrinking violets – want.

The Continental GT – newly facelifted and recently sampled – is a ludicrously over-endowed car. It weighs 200kg more than a Range Rover. It has a 6.0-litre engine in top guise, when most favour of two or perhaps three litres. It offers 12 turbocharged cylinders, when we all know that six – and actually four – are quite enough. It has 531lb ft of torque. It can do 200mph (but where?). You drive a Continental GT's W12 engine typically on about 10% throttle, surfing a tidal wave of untapped torque.

If many mainstream cars endorse the Swedish doctrine of lagom – 'just enough' – then the Continental GT subscribes to Oscar Wilde's philosophy that nothing succeeds like excess. It's a very Bentley Boy sort of car.

No fast car is so relaxing at speed, yet so spirited when the mood takes: limo meets Lambo. If it is a bit too disengaged and remote for you and me then you know that David and Victoria, Wayne and Coleen, Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton will love it. (Keener drivers should choose the cheaper V8S Coupe, one of my favourite Grand Tourers).

Bentley even has a successful motorsport programme, further proof of its bond with yesteryear. Alas, today's drivers – tagged 'Bentley Boys' by marketing – are a shadow of their idiosyncratic forebears. How can they rival Dudley, Bertie or Woolf when the lead driver's name is Guy Smith?

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**Former CAR editor Gavin is an undyingly passionate car bloke. He also wrestles crocodiles, cycles across the Himalayas and was the first man to reach the North Pole wearing short trousers (not really)**





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# Mark Walton

THE INCURABLE ENTHUSIAST

'Football and F1 are both run by autocratic silver-haired grandads who don't know how to give up power'



**IN EVOLUTIONARY** terms, football fans and car enthusiasts evolved on different Galapagos Islands, separated by a deep ocean for millions of years. I've got petrol in my veins, and if you could measure my enthusiasm for football with a thermometer, it would read absolute zero – not a single molecule

of my body is animated. I reckon anyone claiming to like both football and cars is either a fake or a weird, genetic aberration.

Of course, all of this is a big in-joke for the staff at *CAR*, because Editor Phil McNamara IS a football enthusiast, and a supporter of... er... Spurchester Dynamo. Or something. Which means he's either (a) a fake, or (b) the exception that proves the rule, or (c) perhaps he's a mole, under deep cover from *FourFourTwo* magazine, about to sabotage our much-loved publication with covers about... er... offside rules and... er... reverse swing (*that's cricket, moron – ed*).

Anyway, despite this great Wallace Line dividing the flora and fauna of cars and football, I had a weird epiphany the other day. I was listening to Radio 4 and the news about Sepp Blatter, when suddenly the bizarre and deep-running parallels between World Cup football and Formula 1 struck me forcibly.

Think about it: football and F1 are both run by autocratic silver-haired grandads who've been in charge forever and don't know how to give up power. Both men are in relationships with women half their age (Bernie, you sly fox – you're 84 and your new wife is just 38). Both men have been involved in bribery scandals, though as I write nothing's been proven, and this column does not make nor imply any prejudicial accusation vis-à-vis either party aforementioned, nor any other person mentioned or unmentioned, with reference to the points made, either retrospectively or in the future.

Both men run sports that are dominated by international megastars who blow their obscene salaries on yachts, fast cars and tattoos. Both sports are home to at least one gigantic

global brand that sells lots of overpriced, bright red merchandise. Both sports appear to be awash with trillions of dollars in cash that sloshes around like bilge in the bottom of a leaky boat; yet the majority of teams seem to be going bankrupt. Figure that one out. Both sports want to host events in Russia and the Middle East, despite concerns about human rights. Both sports are kept afloat by gigantic corporations who ultimately turn a blind eye.

Funny – now I think about it, I can't believe I haven't got into football earlier! It's exactly like F1! (Only without the cars.)

So what do all these uncanny parallels tell us, apart from what we already know: turning a sport into a global supermarket commodity that's bought and sold by a single billionaire pensioner who's totally cut off from his audience is probably not going to be good for the sport? It suggests to me that it's not the globalisation of football and F1 that have led them astray. Tennis is a global sport, chock-full of well-paid athletes, but that doesn't appear to be a barrel full of eels. My theory is it's not the sports that cause the problems, but the governments. As soon as a rights-holder starts talking to a government about an event, it's no longer about the gladiators on the field, it's a race to see how much those behind the scenes can trouser before they get caught.

The first F1 British Grand Prix was held at Silverstone in 1950, and it was organised by the RAC. Wimbledon is still organised by the quaintly named 'All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club'. But these days Bernie isn't interested in dealing with clubs, he talks to governments about investment and infrastructure, about draining swamps and irrigating deserts, building motorways and airports and state-funded seven-star luxury hotels. That's why historic circuits like Hockenheim and Monza are for the chop, while Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and Russia are all in.

State funding should be taken out of the equation, and we should use a fan-based subscription model, like Portsmouth Football Club, wholly owned by the fans. If F1 adopted that model something tells me Monza would be back in the calendar in a flash, along with Donington; Bahrain would be lost to the sand.

See? I could fix this! Give me 40 years at the helm, I'm sure I could grow into the role.

🐦 @markwalton\_

**An original petrolhead, Mark's been writing witty stuff for *CAR* for what seems like ages. He's never, to our knowledge, reported on a football match**





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Garish Civic Type R tackles plastic Megane and classy Golf in our July issue

## Golf class will out in battle of the hot hatches

### ► VIA EMAIL

I enjoyed reading the Civic Type R Giant Test (CAR, July). Technically, the Honda is undoubtedly impressive, but I'd be embarrassed to drive a car that looks as if it's been designed by a nine year-old. However dynamically brilliant it may be, the styling will deter many potential buyers. At over £36k the Megane looks awfully expensive for a car with dodgy plastics and I'd feel a bit silly buckling my racing harness to pop to the shops. The Golf GTI's ubiquity is down to its ability to handle pretty much everything you throw at it, with an understated level of respectability that many have tried to copy, but none have achieved. Flat-out it may not offer the same thrills as the others, but I suspect that at road speeds it will deliver just as much enjoyment.

**Andrew Montague**

## Beauty and the box

### ► VIA EMAIL

Mr Piggybank is going to get a stuffing as I save up for the delicious new Alfa Giulia for which we eagerly await your first test report. The power of good design is won with Italy victorious but wait, what's this coming over the hill? A new TVR designed by Gordon Murray and powered by a Cosworth V8! Wow! Not even the strictest Buddhist monk can resist such mouth-drooling new cars. And what, according to CAR, is VW preparing in this heady motoring future? Golfs with a yellow stripe and thinner headlights. If the future lies between autonomous boxes by Google and Apple which are too timid to pull out of junctions, clinical Germans or beautiful cars for emotional drivers to cherish, I think I know what most of us will decide.

**Chris Lloyd**

## Giant Test bias!

### ► VIA EMAIL

After your failure to make a realistic comparison during the giant test of the Tesla,

How to have your say:



**VIA EMAIL**

CAR@bauermedia.co.uk



**VIA TWITTER**

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I hoped it was a one-off. However, the Civic Type R test was even worse. How could a 230bhp auto-equipped Golf ever hope to compete with the power and interactivity of the Civic? A manual Golf R would have been a more realistic (and interesting) comparison (and the R starts at just over £30k). I've read CAR every month for 20 years, and never seen this type of bias before. It's like the conclusion is decided, then the article written to justify it.

**Declan Doyle**

*Choosing a group test line-up is always tricky. We went for the Golf GTI because it's the benchmark hot hatch, and surely the Type R should be tested against that. The Golf R was an option, but of course it's 4wd. CAR has always challenged conventional thinking because we believe readers rely on more than raw numbers. But we're hardly biased against the GTI – we've lauded it many times – ed*

## On the return of TVR

### ► VIA CAR ONLINE

Use modern technology to keep the char-

acter. Fit a 'TVR Sport' button to the dash, that on pressing releases steam from the radiator, floods the footwells and makes the door handles fall off.

**Philip Edwards**

## Stunning mash-up!

### ► VIA EMAIL

Wow! The BMW CSL homage (CAR, July) is stunning. A mash-up of E9 CSL, current M4 and i8 styling, yet it works. I want one. I also want the Audi/Ducati sports car in the same issue. The long tail is reminiscent of the Maserati MC-12. After a moribund few years, car styling now seems to be enjoying something of a renaissance.

**Steve Crowther**





## Headline breakdown

> VIA EMAIL

Thank you for the wonderful title of this piece in your June edition: 'Land Rover builds its six millionth car – here's how it breaks down'. My subscription copy has just arrived and it made my day.

**Anthony Healey**

## Lessons for Walter Röhrl

> VIA EMAIL

We are told by John Lee (*Letters*, July) that 'Anyone who has actually driven a 911... just "knows" that the 911 engine is in exactly the right place.' I note published comments from a certain W Röhrl that 'The Cayman GT4 is a perfect handling car, it's a proper race car with a mid-engine.' Walter will be crushed to discover that he has not actually 'driven' a 911, so perhaps Mr Lee could get in touch to offer him some lessons?

**Paul Cox**

## Bernie's secret button

> VIA EMAIL

Charlie Whiting (*CAR*, July) says Bernie Ecclestone has never tried to influence him during an F1 race. Maybe not, but when I saw the two Williams cars jump the two Mercs at the start of the British GP, I did wonder if Bernie had deployed his secret 'make it interesting' button.

**Dennis Cordell**

## Memories of Bugatti

> VIA EMAIL

I must tell you of a memory that Ben Miller's Bugatti piece (*CAR*, May) brought to mind. In 1939, before the war and when I was nine years old, my father, who was a Ford salesman at the time, took me for a Saturday visit and surprise in the

Apple's plan to revolutionise automotive technology: good thing or bad? From our June issue

showroom in Pearl River, New York. The surprise was a ride in a French blue Type 51 Bugatti that a customer had traded in on a new Ford or possibly a Lincoln-Zephyr. No-one at that time knew a thing about the facts or legends associated with the Bugatti name, but my father liked cars and we had a splendid time on our short grand tour of Pearl River in our Bugatti.

**John Adams**

## Lighten up, Mr Walton

> VIA EMAIL

I took some time to view the Formula E official anthem 'horror show' as described by Mark Walton (*CAR*, May). A bit cheesy it may have been, and good for a laugh surely, but please lighten up, Mark! Or are we to assume from now on you'll only be reviewing Hondas supplied with grey cardigan and slippers?

**Russell Deakin**

## Gavin's pension advice

> VIA EMAIL

With reference to Gavin Green's column (*CAR*, July) suggesting 10 automotive



## Apple versus the human factor

### LETTER OF THE MONTH

I haven't finished reading your June issue yet, but already I fear for my passion for cars. If Apple and Google have their way, the final blow to

driver involvement will fall within the decade. Far too many modern cars provide so little feedback through steering, pedals and seat that the driver may as well be a passenger, so I suppose the smartphone-hailed self-driving bubblecar is the next logical step in that direction.

I just wish someone had the courage to ask if we are moving in the right direction. Technology for technology's sake is all around us; we need to take a step back and think about what we really need, instead of being swayed by fancy gadgets that ultimately do not improve our lives. The clutter gets in the way of our interaction with each other and indeed the machines we call cars!

Turning the pages, the article about McLaren test driver Chris Goodwin gives me no comfort. No matter how effective the emphasis on winning races based on data and calculations may be, it leaves no room for passion. The human heart is not a variable in mathematical equations.

Ultimately, I believe that cars which appeal to petrolheads like us aren't the result of pure maths – they always have the elusive 'human' ingredients. Have you ever tried to explain to non-car people what steering feel is? It's almost impossible, because just like mathematics, language is restricted and deals best with the tangible. We live in a world where BMW is ditching rwd because 80% of 1-series drivers think their car is fwd. This is car-making based on data. I do not approve.

**Emil Heise**

Letter of the month wins a free entry into the next supercar prize draw held by BOTB.com, worth £25!





options for blowing your pension. Having just become a gentleman of leisure at 57, I'm going with Option 11: stick with drawdown (insurance companies exist to make a profit), and stick with my 2006 320d Touring that I've had from new. It's going like a train and has only done 83k miles; it's all the car I need.

**Andrew Fogg**

## On the BMW 2-series Active Tourer

► VIA CAR ONLINE

I'd consider an F46 220i M Sport Gran Tourer B48 2.0i. Although I worry that it may undergo a mid-life update by the time I'd finished saying its name.

**Pete H**

## Where's the Punto?

► VIA EMAIL

So sad to see that your supermini group test (CAR, May) took place without a Fiat. An entirely justified omission given the company's current offerings. Where's the next Punto—long overdue surely?

**Robin Capper**



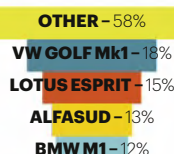
## CAR ONLINE

5 most read stories on carmagazine.co.uk

- 1) New Alfa Romeo Giulia unveiled: you found our breaking news of the next 159 irresistible
- 2) VW Golf R400 scoop: CAR's confirmation that a hot 400bhp Golf is coming clicked furiously
- 3) We had all the pictures of the new 2016 Audi A4 the minute the embargo was lifted in Ingolstadt
- 4) Comic actor and petrolhead Rowan Atkinson sells his McLaren F1 for an estimated £8 million
- 5) Last but by no means least, you enjoyed our web drive of last month's cover star, the Honda Civic Type R

## THE CAR POLL

Which was your favourite car designed by Giorgetto Giugiaro, who's quit Italdesign, the company he founded in 1968?



**Aventador SV: a supercar we could actually buy, if we could afford it – from our July issue**

## Bella Super Veloce

► VIA EMAIL

Many thanks to your team for July's article about the Lamborghini Aventador SV. It was just what I needed in the wake of all that nonsense about Porsche's GT4 and GT3 RS being sold out before they've even gone on sale. With the Aventador SV we have something that we can simply stare at in awe and wonder. Its apparent capability is a bonus, but its very existence is a joy. No need to pretend we could own this one. *It owns us.*

**Gerard Cunningham**

## Rose-tinted Jaguar

► VIA EMAIL

I have just read the latest instalment of CAR and in particular the test with the new Jag XE. Firstly it seems odd that your chosen rival from BMW would be a 420 Gran Coupe. I can imagine BMW would hold their press cars back with a month to go to an all-important facelift launch. Perhaps the plaudits for the aluminium-intensive structure in the Jag had already been written. Realising that it weighs almost exactly the same as the steel structures from a 3-series or C-class, perhaps the significantly heavier Gran Coupe was chosen in an attempt to limit the embarrassment for Jaguar? The tint on the rose spectacles gets ever darker.

**Nick Connell**

## On our new Tech section

► VIA TWITTER

For once, a motoring magazine with proper #tech features. Yay! Well done @CARmagazine.

**Stephen Houston**

## On the Mini Clubman

► VIA CAR ONLINE

So it's safe to assume that Mini is now a brand name, and nothing to do with size. What a shame.

**Nick**

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# Your month

The place where you let us peek into your weird and wonderful automotive lives

## 1 A GOLF HOLIDAY

11 days, 8 countries, 2463 miles in my Golf GTI with my son Callum, 19 sharing the driving (£31 additional premium!). Highlights included visits to the Porsche museum in Stuttgart, Museo Dell'Automobile Torino and a night at the former Fiat factory, the Lingotto. Fantastic.

PHILIP SINCLAIR

## 2 NON CARBONFIBRE TUB

A 7 hour drive in the Caravelle to the Scottish Highlands, followed by a week of relaxation with a few of my favourite things! What better way to spend a week away from work? More trips planned with my CAR subscription coming up!

RICHIE LEE

## 3 SHADES OF BUDAPEST

Walking around Budapest, whilst Interrailing around Europe, I stumbled upon this contrast of old and modern parked on the banks of the Danube.

HARRY SAUNDERS

## 4 RESPECT ON THE SOMME

I diverted on my way to Le Mans to visit the Somme. It felt only natural to pay my respects to those who gave up what they had so I could have the life I do today.

CHRIS WILKINSON

## 5 KRIS MEEKE, LEGEND

2015 Argentine WRC winner Kris Meeke made my son and nephew's day by joining them for a photo at the Festival of Speed.

IAN HOLMES

## 6 GREECE IS THE WORD

Back in Greece for the annual family holiday in Gythio. Upgraded to 2.9 TDi Movano with semi auto 'box. Goes well, but passengers had to wait while I finished a particularly good article!

ANDREW STRAZZA

## 7 LOTUS FANS

We drove to Hertenstein, Switzerland for our Golden wedding. I parked the Merc next to five Lotuses owned by Belgian and Dutch enthusiasts off for a drive through Europe. They love the cars but were moaning about the idea of a Lotus SUV!

MEL PRIESTLEY

## 8 McLAREN LE MANS STAR

Walked into the office a few days ago, and was greeted by this on display. Great way to celebrate the month of Le Mans.

STEPHEN SAWARD

## 9 GT-R vs SNOW RISK

High Snow Risk during our unforgettable Highland Hoon in May, so we let the four wheel drive Datsun take the lead over Bealach na Bà to Applecross.

ALASDAIR EASSON



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Model shown: Canford 202-012 Mountain Rescue Special Edition on black nato webbing.

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Words Ben Oliver

# ASTON TO THE

**WORLD EXCLUSIVE!** We get the only passenger ride up the Goodwood hill in the





# MARTIN FUTURE!

Photography Steffen Jahn

800bhp Vulcan, then Aston boss Andy Palmer reveals his thrilling masterplan...



**F THE HANDBOOK** for the new Aston Martin Vulcan contains running-in instructions, I don't think Darren Turner has read them. This 800-plus horsepower, £1.8m hypercar is just two days old. It was finished at 3am on Wednesday and briefly shaken down at Turweston aerodrome later that day ('I've only really driven it in a straight line before,' says Turner) before being trucked to the

Goodwood Festival of Speed to make its rolling public debut. This is the first prototype, but it has already been sold to a Swiss collector who also has the prototype One-77 and is sitting trackside, watching what we're about to do to his car.

The marshals wave us off and the Aston factory Le Mans driver gives it full gas, the cold slicks instantly spinning up and sending the hand-made, 7.0-litre racing V12 – the most powerful naturally aspirated engine Aston Martin has ever made – into its 7400rpm rev limiter with a percussive roar which cleverly stays just this side of painful. YouTube later tells me that there's a dense white cloud of smoke coming from the Vulcan's rears and long licks of flame from the side-pipes, but I can't see them. There are wing mirrors, but my eyes are locked on the tree-canopied stretch of driveway ahead of us, and the first right-hander which we are now approaching at alarming speed.

Despite breaking traction the Vulcan feels genuinely, frighteningly quick: similar to the Bugatti Veyron in that you worry it might be more than your constitution can handle. You feel the blood being forced from your feet back up into your torso, leaving your thighs oddly tingly as they empty. But unlike the Veyron, this is an analogue car. Turner shares with other really good professional racing drivers the appearance of doing almost nothing to control it. He just sits there, quite still, his slight frame looking like no match for the Vulcan. Yet his mental traction control is firing off a thousand instructions per second to his hands and right foot for the almost imperceptible movements which keep this irreplaceable car from spearing off into the hay bales. ▶



Our man Ben awaits the return of the blood to his legs and feet



Only 24 will be built, and for track use only. So after today the only place we'll see it is on telly





In the driver's seat next to me Aston's boss grins. 'Let's just take it for a bloody drive, shall we?'



And just for a minute you find yourself wondering: 'Will that wing fit between the bridge pillars?'





Palmer's a racer, so he knows this drill: say 'for sure' a lot, blame the tyres, the stewards, rivals etc

The lairily-livered no.97 Vantage V8 GTE campaigned by Darren Turner at Le Mans also got an outing at Goodwood



derPressure



↑  
Palmer with *CAR's* Oliver: 'Aston has been bankrupt seven times, and got lucky seven times'

24 will be made for track use only, although Aston might be able to modify one for you for road use – they've had serious enquiries – and privately they expect some to be used on the road in countries where the owner also owns the road. Many cars make their first public appearance at Goodwood now, but for most of the crowd their first sight of a Vulcan will also be their last. Later, after the track has closed, we park the Vulcan on the start line for our cover shoot. Taxis and dump-trucks and double-decker buses leaving the Festival squeeze past its very expensive carbon flanks, possibly the only time it will share road space with humdrum traffic.

An Aston Rapide arrives bearing Aston's CEO Andy Palmer, along with design chief Marek Reichman and one of Aston's shareholders. Even Palmer and Reichman, who both race, haven't ridden in the Vulcan yet. Palmer gets into the driver's seat next to me for the cover shot. He leans forward around the exaggerated wing of the seat, fixes me with a cheeky, enthusiastic grin, and shows that he's thinking exactly what you hope he would when seated at the wheel of an 800bhp car, looking up a hillclimb. 'Let's just take it for a bloody drive, shall we?'

You would like Palmer. Unlike many CEOs he is affable, approachable and mostly manages to hide the steel that got

I'm lucky. This is the first time that anyone outside Aston Martin has experienced a Vulcan. Few ever will. Just

him almost to the top at Nissan and made him one of the most senior Brits in the global car industry, having started as a 16 year-old apprentice.

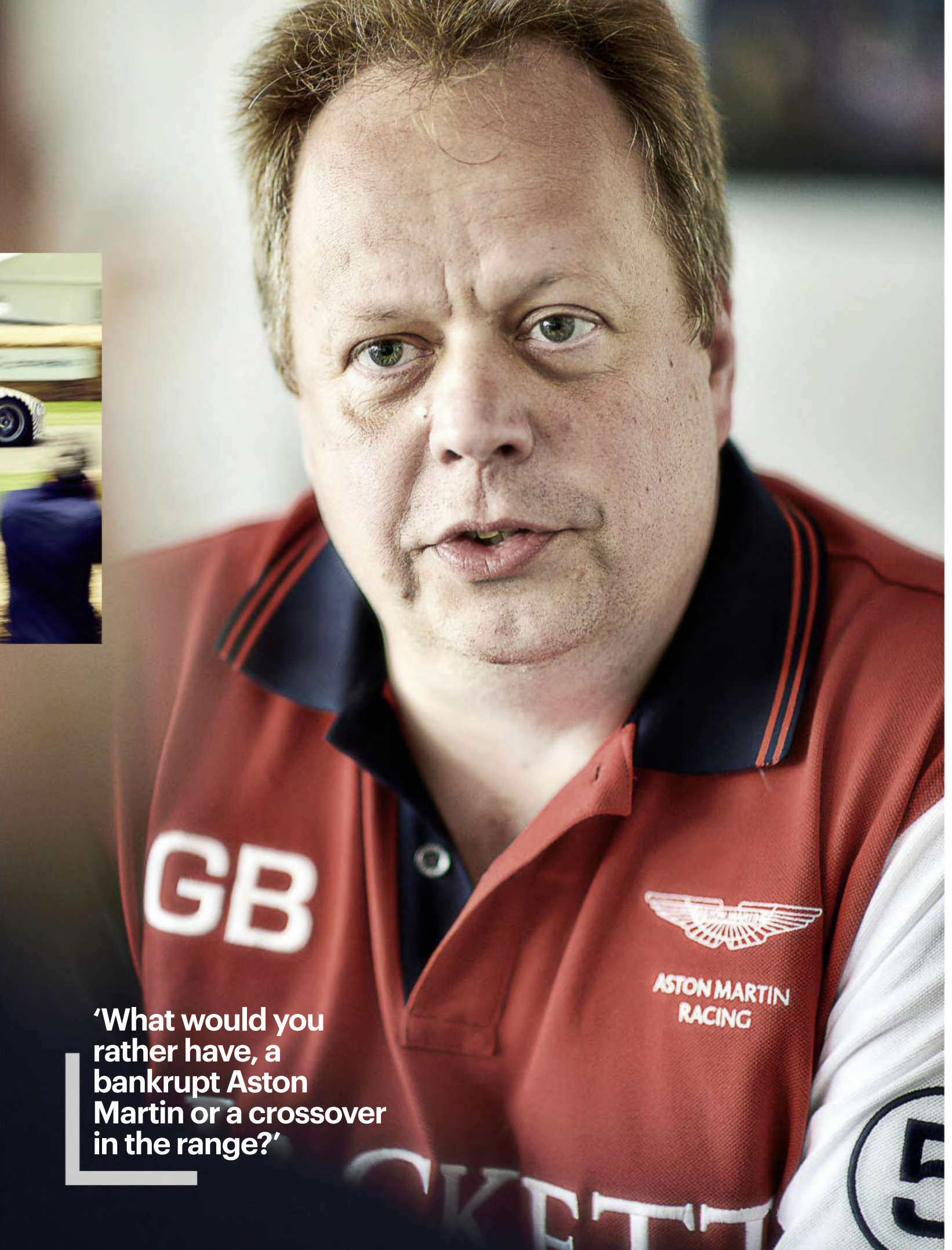
'When I was 20 years old my determination was to run a car company,' he tells me later. 'I had convinced myself that I'd done that by being head of Infiniti and head of product development at Nissan. But I was kidding myself, and I was never going to be CEO of Nissan or Renault.'

'And then the Aston offer came along. I tried to do the rational thing. I remember sitting at my desk and writing down all the pros and cons. But then I thought, "what the bloody hell am I doing? I have the chance to run a car company based five miles from where I went to school. Isn't it bloody obvious?"'

Palmer officially joined Aston Martin on 1 October last year and has been enjoying himself. He started the week of Goodwood at the Nürburgring, before hanging out with Serena Williams, an unpaid Aston fan, then flying to Cannes to sign a global advertising deal with Sir Martin Sorrell and his WPP group. At Goodwood he has been busy smoking the Lagonda mostly sideways up the hill with a succession of wide-eyed journalists aboard, and being buttonholed by Aston Martin fans and owners. 'I do get jumped on,' he says. 'But I think that the CEO should be the most accessible person in an organisation, not the least.'

He also enjoys his new-found freedom from the PR constraints of a big Japanese corporation, and uses it to leave you in no doubt about the scale and seriousness of his task at Aston. ►





**'What would you rather have, a bankrupt Aston Martin or a crossover in the range?'**





## THE VULCAN

With just 24 being built and a pricetag of £1.8m you could be forgiven for thinking the Vulcan is a glorious irrelevance. But the styling previews the next Vantage

**AS WE LEANED** on the Vulcan's wing at the top of the Goodwood hillclimb, I asked Darren Turner where we should visualise this gentleman's track-day special on a scale that runs from Aston's road cars at one end, to his class-winning Vantage GTE Le Mans racer at the other. 'Honestly, it's not between them. It's way beyond the racing car. It has so much more power, it's only around 40 or 50kg heavier and it has an aero package completely unconstrained by regulations. That and the big slick tyres mean that even someone who is used to driving a serious, road-going supercar on track is going to find the Vulcan's performance very surprising.'

The Vulcan's specifications, if you missed them: a carbon tub derived from that of the One-77, with carbon panels; a 7.0-litre V12 from Aston Martin Racing making over 800bhp; a six-speed sequential transaxle; a full aero package, slicks, no number plate and the world's cheapest-looking rear-view mirror. Oh, and air-jacks, which are so cool they're worth the £1.8m alone. Just 24 will be made.

Turner can't tell me much about how it drives, because nobody has driven it much. Before he took me up the hill in it, this first prototype had only done about 40km with

Turner on its first shakedown just two days before. He will be responsible for setting the cars up, and coaching the drivers.

He discovered more about it during our run, including the fact that the V12 will both pull away and light up the rears in third. 'It feels almost completely dialled-in already,' he says. 'When you turn in, the rear wants to keep up with the front and it stays completely stable under braking.'

From the passenger seat the Vulcan feels predictably oh-my-god fast, but also oddly refined for a car with a side-exiting race exhaust and push-rod racing suspension that doesn't need to allow for potholes and speed bumps. It develops a big, hard yowl as it hits its 7400rpm limiter (we did that a lot) but it's never painful: it corners race-car flat but the ride isn't crashy or jarring. Turner and his colleagues get paid to sit in harsh racing cars and they and their employers don't mind if they're spent at the end of a stint. Vulcan drivers will want to park it in the pit lane, have a shower, and go for a night out.


'We're not looking for that last nth of performance, as

with a racing car,' says Turner. 'It has to be driveable, and to give owners the confidence to push.'


At least ten buyers have already signed for a Vulcan: several during the Festival of Speed, and one for two cars. They might all be sold by the time you read this. If a seven-figure supercar you'll never see leaves you a little cold, keep in mind that it previews the styling of the next Vantage, due in 2018, and that this will be the last new naturally aspirated model Aston launches. Eight hundred horsepower. What a way to go.

**'Even those used to driving a supercar on track will find the performance surprising'**





You get your full £1.8m worth of drama inside here, even with the battery hastily stashed in the passenger footwell



Darren Turner explores ways to mention the effect of a passenger on the power-to-weight ratio without being rude





Palmer tests the Lagonda Taraf sports saloon at Goodwood. Another pillar in Aston's super-premium strategy



## THE DBX &



### James Bond one minute, the Chinese crossover market the next. Aston's busy on all fronts

'WE'RE LIKE the hottest kitchen on the planet at the minute,' Aston Martin's chief creative officer Marek Reichman said of his design studio when I went there exactly a year ago. 'I'm the chef who keeps saying, "yeah, more of that, more of this, this tastes brilliant, but we need another one". To the outside world, it's quite calm. But the kitchen is going, believe me.'

We believed him. And now he has proved it. In addition to the Lagonda, which was already signed off by then, Marek and his team have since completed James Bond's bespoke DB10 (above left), which was revealed along with the rest of the *Spectre* cast at Pinewood last December and hints at the DB9 replacement coming next year, and the Vulcan and the DBX

(above right), which were both unveiled at this year's Geneva show.

Of these, the DBX is easily the most significant. It will be Aston Martin's first crossover and probably its biggest seller, a car central to CEO Andy Palmer's plan to give Aston the scale it needs to be sustainable and consistently profitable. The in-wheel motors of the concept are just handwaving: there may be a hybrid Aston drivetrain by the time the production DBX arrives around 2019, but the core engine is likely to be Mercedes' twin-turbo 4.0-litre V8, which sneaks under a current tax threshold in China, the DBX's likely biggest market. A year ago, Marek hinted to me that flying cantrails might be a feature of future Astons: and there they are on the DBX. But forget the two-door styling – that's there to ease Aston traditionalists into the idea of a crossover.



**Design boss Reichman talks to CAR in 'the hottest kitchen on the planet'**

'If this plan works, it will be a transformation far greater than that which the DB9 and Vantage brought in the 2000s,' he says. 'They were phenomenal cars and they transformed our sales, but they didn't transform Aston into a viable company. It is not normal for a car company to be unable to fund the replacements for its core products, and we currently can't.'

This lack of development cash is why we criticise Aston for a model range that feels long in the tooth and too closely related. 'It's a downward spiral, and you've got to break out of it. Your sales will drop. Soon you can't even meet your fixed costs, which for an Aston Martin are extraordinarily high. Nobody will bankroll a car company forever. Aston Martin has been bankrupt seven times, and got lucky seven times. What if we don't get lucky an eighth time? What if we go into receivership and become one of those lost British brands? I don't want to be the CEO of that company.'

So, Palmer's plan: reduced to its essentials, it goes like this. The first bit has been done: raising the cash from shareholders to fund the new models which Aston can't currently finance itself, and which will finally give it the volumes it needs to be self-sustaining. The sports cars will all be replaced, and one more added, starting with the DB11 which will appear at Geneva next year. There will be a new Vantage by 2018, and a new Vanquish after that. Could the fourth sports car be a mid-engined





Palmer's proud and focused. 'If I can enable the company to survive, I can live with the comments on Twitter'



**CC100 roadster concept, built for Aston's centenary, also joined the party at Goodwood**

hypercar like the DP100 concept? Possibly, but it's a long way off. All new Astons will have Mercedes electrical architecture, giving it a fast, cost-effective, world-class solution in an area in which it currently lags behind its rivals, and which will become more important in the era of connected cars. Mercedes will also supply Aston's V8s, which will now be turbocharged. The new V12 will still be built by Aston at its facility inside Ford's Cologne engine plant, but it will also be turbocharged and will be introduced first in the DB11.

And there will be more differentiation. 'I want them all to look like Aston Martins. But I also want my 76 year-old mum to be able to tell at a glance the difference between a Vantage, a DB and a Vanquish.' The sports cars will be capped at 7000 cars each year, the same number that Ferrari thinks is right to maintain exclusivity. It also happens to be the effective production capacity of Gaydon if working two shifts.

But that's still not enough to pay the bills. So here come the two really difficult, controversial tasks. First, Palmer has to add two new model types to the Aston line-up. A successor to the utterly stunning Lagonda saloon, which is based on the current VH architecture and capped at 200 units, won't be a problem. But a crossover based on the DBX concept might be a harder sell. And there will be one final new model which is currently just a proposal and won't be seen for five years, if at all.

We're not giving Palmer a pass here, but you just can't argue with the sales and industrial logic of making a crossover. There is no other option. The total global market for exotic two-door sports cars is too small to allow Aston to grow to the scale it requires. But SUV and crossover sales are booming. Every other major luxury car maker is making an SUV, bar Ferrari but including Rolls-Royce. They're doing it not only to grab a slice of this new super-premium SUV market, but also to offset the likely coming decline in their big, standard, luxury saloons. Does Palmer get bored of people telling him that Aston should somehow be immune to all of this?

'I get it a lot. The simple point is, what would you rather have: a bankrupt Aston Martin, or a crossover in the range? ▶







Those guys in white? They're not marshals, but Porsche lawyers

## THE VANTAGE GT12

### Ten years on, Vantage saves its rawest, hardest act 'til last

THE £250,000 ASTON Martin Vantage GT12 also made its UK debut at Goodwood, even though all 100 have already been sold. It's tempting to think of the GT12 as a last hurrah for the decade-old Vantage, the car that kept Aston alive through the financial crisis. It's certainly hard to see how Aston can improve on the 592bhp of its 6.0-litre V12 without cramming the Vulcan's 7.0-litre under the vented bonnet. And after an automotive 5:2 diet of lightweight materials the GT12's handling ought to get close to the Vantage race cars it's based on. The name was due to match the racer's too – GT3 – but Porsche's lawyers cleared their throats at the car's Geneva launch. The new GT12 name just draws attention to the 911 GT3's serious cylinder deficiency. But like an elderly Greek, the Vantage will have to keep working well past retirement age while Aston sorts its finances out. Although this may be its high point, we expect the Vantage to have to toil on until 2018 with the help of an interior upgrade and at least one more limited edition.



GT12, with 592bhp, cuts a mighty confident dash. Witness old Aston signing off, and passing the baton

It's as simple as that. There are actually a whole bunch of customers around the world who would love an Aston crossover. If you're a purist, see it as the moneybox that lets us do the next Vulcan. But it's more fun-

damental than that. It will enable this company to survive. If it does, I can live with the comments on Twitter.'

With a full, seven-car line-up, Palmer wants Aston to build 15,000 cars each year by 2021. That won't happen at Gaydon. And it might not happen in the UK.

'My number-one choice would be Gaydon, but there isn't space. Number two: somewhere else in the UK. But it comes down to your ability to afford to do that car, and build that factory, and there are other places around the world that will give us money for the honour of having an Aston Martin built in their country. But the perfect solution would be to make a deal work in the UK.'

Is it just us, or does that sound like an appeal to the UK Government to help Aston stay here? Either way, the most likely overseas location for Aston's second plant is the United States, from where it would be cheaper to ship cars to China. Those two markets together will dwarf all others in their appetite for the crossover. It seems likely that at least half of Aston's production will one day be built elsewhere. The decision will be made in the next three months. Are you

reading this, George Osborne?

With all this happening, the Vulcan suddenly makes sense. I had wondered how relevant you might find a track-only, £1.8m car to be made in tiny numbers. I wondered if it might be a distraction from the serious business of rebuilding Aston's core models, and its finances. But then I saw the way the Goodwood crowds reacted to it when Turner and I trundled more gently back down the hill: shouts, waves, photos and open-mouthed astonishment, even among some pretty astonishing company. If Palmer is going to broaden Aston Martin he needs to deepen it too, and give the purists cars like this which maintain the final part of Aston's mantra of power, beauty, soul.

'Every year, we'll do two special cars,' he says. 'This year it's Vulcan and GT12; next year there will be two more. They're not a distraction: they're strategic, not tactical. They'll become the provenance cars of the future. With a run of only 24, you can imagine what a Vulcan might be worth in the future.'

Or what Aston Martin might be worth to the patient shareholders who are underwriting all of this, should Palmer finally make the company consistently and sufficiently profitable. 'If I can do what I've told the shareholders I can do, and put this company on a stable footing and with a momentum that will just grow, I'll have written a little bit of automotive history.'

@thebenoliver



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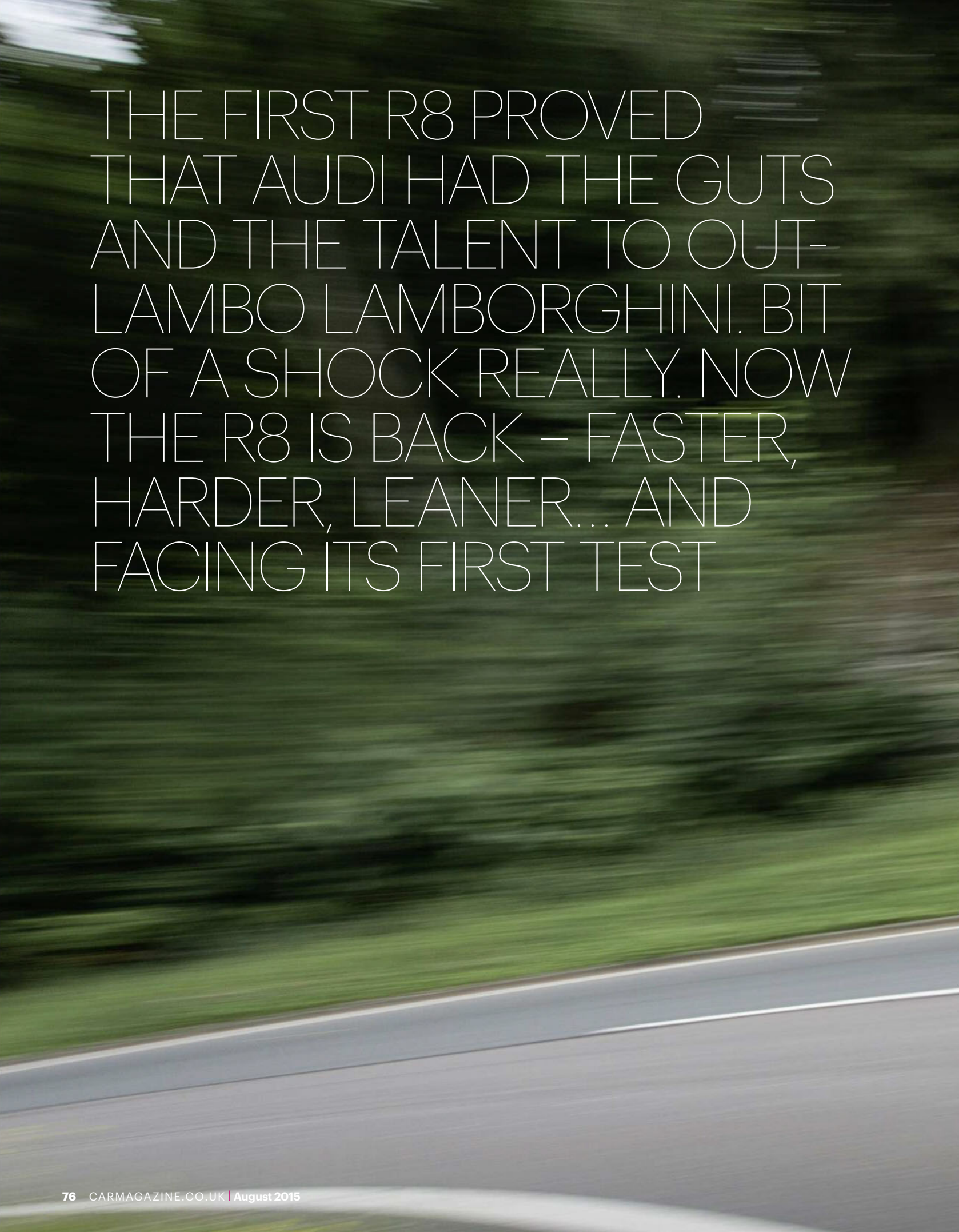
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THE FIRST R8 PROVED  
THAT AUDI HAD THE GUTS  
AND THE TALENT TO OUT-  
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OF A SHOCK REALLY. NOW  
THE R8 IS BACK – FASTER,  
HARDER, LEANER... AND  
FACING ITS FIRST TEST



# FAST. BACK.



Words Georg Kacher Photography Tom Salt



Where does R8 fit in Audi's 'corporate face' strategy? You know it's an Audi behind you, but do you know it's a special one?



Our Georg hard at work, trying to drive while figuring out all the R8's drive settings.







And still not quite at the rev limiter...

**BOILED DOWN TO** its essence, the brief was this: take the R8 and make it much better. Better on track, better on road, better inside, better to live with, better looking... better than a McLaren or (whisper it) a Lamborghini? Okay, the last one isn't official policy, but why not? The V10 engine in this, the second generation R8 V10 Plus, is the same as that in the Huracan, and at 602bhp, punches with exactly the same power. Uncomfortably close, but as I climb into the Audi and hit the Engine Start button I've only got one thing on my mind: have they nailed the brief?

Straight away the answer feels like yes. The car manages to feel precise yet deliciously analogue, urged on by the sublime engine making artillery noises right behind my head as the seven-speed dual-clutch 'box rams home each cog. The whole momentum of the car feels as if it revolves around the engine, longitudinally mounted dead-centre, snuggling down like a diva in its glass-covered display case. The masterstroke is that Audi has ignored the fashion for turbocharging, thus releasing not only a sound to die for, but also the kind of impressive throttle response the turbo tribe has lost forever. It would have been easy for r&d to clamp on two turbos, shooting the output into telephone numbers territory, but instead r&d chief Ulrich Hackenberg opted to push the normally aspirated V10 to new heights. Why? Because in the supercar niche, emotion still eclipses efficiency any day of the week. And emotion is what this 40-valver evokes in large doses. It epitomises the spirit of the whole car.

Evidently the R8 delivers the pure, old-school driving thrills of a no-frills sports coupe from yesteryear. The short films it screens in the cinema inside your head are as rich and powerful as the golden era of '70s cinema, before CGI showmanship stormed Hollywood. Not that the new R8 is devoid of cutting-edge technology, it often just costs extra. Adjustable dampers and the variable-rate Dynamic Steering cost are, for example, bundled into a £3500 pack. Which is fine because purists can easily do without them. You see, magnetic ride would make much more sense if a separate button on the helm enabled you to momentarily switch to a softer calibration. And Dynamic Steering starts blurring the border between indirect and indifferent at speeds in excess of 125mph. These technologies can numb the man/machine interface. Thank goodness, though, for the standard carbon-ceramic brakes. On a circuit, the top-notch energy squashers remain totally cool and unfazed while Michelin's finest have long morphed into liquorice. On the autobahn, instant response, zero fading and plenty of pedal feel allow you to drop the anchor ridiculously late. Which is another way of saying that the margin for error is significantly wider than in most competitors. ▶



V10 Plus gets to wear a fixed carbon wing befitting its status. Boggo V10 makes do with weedy auto-lip



## **'Visual consistency is a must. Why do you think the 911 has been a success for half a century?'**

than more senior users. Any analogue vibe disappears quickly in here. 'It's only a matter of getting accustomed to the redesigned driver environment,' says quattro division boss Heinz Hollerweger, who also must have left school a few decades ago. Less shrewd operators, however, will likely need more than two eyes and ten fingers to navigate through the maze of buttons, switches and levers.

This debatable approach is epitomised by the sports steering-wheel, standard on the V10 Plus. It's hard enough to suss out the multiple controls placed in the two spokes, but why does Drive Select live next to the button-cum-thumb-wheel marked Performance? While Drive Select tweaks the car's main traits, Performance lets you choose between three settings marked Dry, Wet and Snow. Although both algorithms influence the ESC set-up, there is an additional two-stage ESC switch in the dashboard. Is this overkill galore, or are we missing the point? Maybe Audi should have opted for the unambiguous and quick single-toggle solution

Those who grew up in a digitised world, controller in one hand and mobile phone in the other, are bound to find the new R8's man/machine interface easier to digest

found in every Ferrari and in the Porsche 918.

The configurable digital binnacle we know from the TT here features an additional performance display mode dominated by a large analogue rev counter with incorporated digital speedometer. When in the Manual drive programme, the upper segments change colour under full acceleration. At the end of this eye-catching yellow-green-and-red sequence, a series of circular flashes at 8500rpm demand an instant upshift. The display on the left is connected to phone, on-board computer, sat-nav and radio. Its counterpart on the right relays vehicle data such as fluid temperatures, g-force, torque curve, tyre pressures and lap times. Sounds perfectly pragmatic, but can be a major source of distraction, especially in combination with the scratchpad and the MMI hardware between the seats.

From a design point of view, the 'better car brief' was a clear vote for evolution over revolution. 'Never change a winning formula!' says designer Marc Lichte, who inherited the project in its final stage from Wolfgang Egger. 'To establish a product in this segment, visual consistency is a must. Why do you think the 911 has been a runaway success for over half a century?' Audi would probably use different words to describe the market performance of the first R8, which was a modest profit-maker. In total, less than 27,000 have been made since 2007. The Mk2 needs to do better.





From a distance on the road it's hard to decipher the familiar form language as new. Only at second sight, the stance begins to look bolder, the proportions appear more aggressive, and one also notices that the trademark sideblades are split by a body colour muscle made of light alloy. Now zoom in even closer and check out the new lights, the revised air intakes and the butch rear end boasting a massive diffuser topped by a fixed full-size carbonfibre wing. Check the dark 20in wheels, prominent vertical splitters front and rear, and a pair of Darth Vader door mirrors. It's a clever metamorphosis of the upgraded MSS (Modular Sports Car System) architecture.

Inside, the packaging and its constraints feel familiar, too. The vast dashboard is again not exactly an object lesson in space efficiency, the front wheelhouses take up more cabin space than they should, and the adjustment range of the perfectly shaped seats is compromised by the proximity of the firewall. That said, Audi claims there is now up to 226 litres of luggage room between the occupants and the drivetrain. The lidded cubicle in the stubby nose cone will swallow an additional 112 litres.

Our test car is a top-of-the-range V10 Plus which develops a throaty and sonorous 602bhp, 60bhp more than the outgoing model. It roars and wails and thunders on eye level with the Lamborghini Huracan, which feels ▶

## GET AN R8 FOR £50k

**BUY A USED ONE – IT'S THE PERFECT TIME!**

### How much for a used R8, then?

Anywhere from £150k to less than a third of that, which means you could be driving a supercar for substantially less than the price of a BMW M4. And this ain't no highly strung prima donna with financially crippling suicidal tendencies – it's an Audi.

### Which one to buy?

Forget the big-money V10s and limited

editions – we reckon prices still have a way to drop before they become collectors' items. Go for an early 414bhp V8 manual, and enjoy the rear-biased 4wd in combo with that magic open-gate shift action. Under £50k with full Audi service history (though smart owners only go to Audi for a regular stamp, using more affordable specialists for everything else),

### What goes wrong?

Not a huge amount. Sensor and earthing issues can be painful to diagnose, the R Tronic auto 'box eats clutches faster than the manual, and until engines hit 20k miles they consume a lot of oil. Aftermarket exhausts are common, just be wary of other mods. Routine servicing is cheap for a car of this type but a rainy day fund for unexpected bills is essential.





# Audi prefers to paint the R8 as a hardcore sports car. To an extent it does match this description

somehow not quite as it should be. 'These two cars are completely different in character and appeal,' claims Hollerweger. 'More equitable and more keenly priced, the Audi aims at a less extrovert clientele.' The marketing men in Sant'Agata may not see things quite the same way, though. After all, it won't be easy to squeeze even more power out of the V10. And although the R8 Plus costs £7000 more than last year's vintage, it is at £137,500 still £49,260 less pricey than the Huracan.

To me the R8 feels even more mature, grown-up and balanced than the Mk1. That had a beautifully composed ride, deliciously accurate steering and a rear-drive bias that set it apart from contemporary Audis. The R8 V10 Plus is more characterful but still benign, it's still focused yet compliant, attentive and responsive. At Audi, they don't like these attributes – too soft, too mainstream, too GT-like. The picture Hackenberg and Hollerweger prefer to paint is that of a hardcore sports car. To an extent, the new R8 does match this description. But it is more than a one-dimensional, single-purpose road rocket. It fuses remarkable speed with a reassuring flow, it rules the 100 to 200mph zone with an almost eerie tranquility, and it won't allow the rough stuff to deflect its trajectory. The most striking single talent? That must be the cornering master plan which bundles steering inputs, torque distribution and ABS/ESC surveillance to an impressively fast, clean and stable line.

Now that quattro can be 100% fwd or 100% rwd, the modulation through quick and slow bends has gained extra transparency. It's all in the mix: the ever so slightly self-correcting steering, the nudge-me-towards-the apex front Haldex diff, the massive 413lb ft torque avalanche which kicks off as soon as the radius opens up. Too radical, too raw and raucous? Definitely not. Energetic, efficient, effortless? You bet. But bear in mind that the R8 wants to be de-cocooned and properly prepped for every excursion to the limit of adhesion. Punching in the

right sequence of do's and don'ts feels like safe-cracking. Although locking Performance in Dry, putting the standard Drive Select in Dynamic and ESC in Off does the trick on the track, this is still no 911 or 488. But it's a proper Audi through and through, so you get lots of dynamic control and rock-solid stability.

It's hard to get past the engine though. Hit the red button and the chips briefly rev the (cold) V10 to 2500rpm, thereby setting the tone for the many

arias that are still to come. Especially with the exhaust in hooligan mode (there's a button for that on the steering wheel!), the R8 does a splendid job ruffling street cafes and summoning one smartphone camera after the other. In this car, the computer rules by spanning the entire earth-friendliness spectrum from automatic coasting and cylinder-on-demand frugality to artificially created lift-off blat-blat and full-throttle upshift splat-splat. Pity that the bean counters black-flagged the atmospheric engine bay lighting available for the first-edition cars.

The quad-cam unit is mated to a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission. There is no hybrid assistance as with Porsche's 918, but you can get in line for an all-electric 462bhp R8 E-tron. When fitted with standard rubber instead of semi-slicks, the 1555kg R8 can – thanks to quattro – accelerate in 3.2sec from 0-62mph and in 9.9sec from 0-125mph. Although the top speed is 206mph, anything above 190mph requires a long, flat and empty straight. Audi fitted cylinder deactivation so the R8 runs as a five-pot under low loads, and fuel economy is claimed to have improved 13% to 22.9mpg. But according to the on-board computer our red coupe consumed 11.7mpg, and this was even before we attacked the race track. Just about the only direct rivals which can better these numbers are the McLarens and the Ferrari 488 GTB.

The V10 Plus is better equipped and quantifiably quicker than the 533bhp standard R8 (which retails at £119,500). Sadly, the 450bhp V8 is no longer part of the R8 family. We also mourn the departure of the notchy but sensuous six-speed manual transmission. Although Audi has not yet finalised the V8 replacement, the Ingolstadt grapevine is predicting a 450bhp twin-turbo 2.9-litre V6 – allegedly essential for the Chinese market. Definitely an anti-climax for fans of high-revving big-block engines that can breathe without respirator. On the credit side, we note a 40% increase in static torsional rigidity, more high-speed downforce in the front (up to 40kg) and in the rear (up to 100kg), and wider 20in tyres (size 245/30 and 305/30). Hard to quantify exactly, but the R8 does feel utterly planted. The most remarkable high-tech extras are perhaps the laser-spot headlamps, which double the high-beam range.

They did what they could to teach this car manners, to make sure it scores most of the big points, to eliminate flaws wherever possible. And yet it's not mere competence that makes the new R8 shine. Quite the contrary: this Audi is about fascination by reduction. It draws emotion from an old-school normally-aspirated V10, a supersonic gearbox, out-of-this-world brakes, and 4wd operating with surgical precision. Eight hours after picking it up we returned a wonderfully analogue high-mech sports car infiltrated, more or less successfully, with digital innovations. The best of both worlds? Not quite. But certainly no middle-of-the-road me-too paleface. **CD**

R8's new nose is longer, but dramatic impact of that single-frame grille is ruined by numberplate



Customers said 'make it more bespoke', so Audi did. Steering wheel features exhaust button. Juvenile, but we love it

## AUDI R8 V10 PLUS

**Price** £137,500

**Engine** 5204cc 40v V10, 602bhp @ 8250rpm, 413lb ft @ 6500rpm

**Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch auto, four-wheel drive

**Suspension** Aluminium double wishbones front and rear

**Performance** 3.2sec 0-62mph, 205mph, 23.0mpg, 287g/km CO2

**Length/width/height** 4426/1940/1240mm

**Weight/made from** 1555kg, aluminium/carbonfibre

**Rating** ★★★★★





It was designed to have engine-bay lighting, but the bean-counters said no. In a £137k car? How spoilsporty can you get?



**car** INSIDE PORSCHE'S LE MANS GARAGE

# 24 hours that put Porsche back on top

The next 86,400 seconds will decide whether Porsche was right to return to Le Mans. We're there in the heat of that garage, living every second

**Words** Tom Clarkson **Photography** Thomas Butler







↑  
Car no.17 is Mark Webber's car (shared with Timo Bernhard and Brendon Hartley). It's painted red to salute Porsche's first Le Mans triumph back in 1970

←  
It feels odd to be kipping in the midst of the world's greatest motor race. Webber managed 'a couple of hours' shuteye





↑ Last checks, but these guys don't fret over data like they do in F1



↑ Webber with David and Karen Coulthard. 'Och, good luck,' etc

G

**GOODNESS IT'S CROWDED** in here. There are 25 mechanics in the garage, each wearing expressions of focused calm, each uniformed, and they move around like the well-oiled machine they're here to fettle. The air is thick with mechanical smells, the echoey excitement of a massive crowd outside, and a deep, rich sense of expectation. For this is the year that Porsche want to win Le Mans for the first time in 17 years, having failed on their return last year, and these are the guys charged with delivering that goal.

And in the corner, right at the back, there's me, watching it all unfold like a live drama. I've got 24 hours to practice the art of not getting in the way. *I'm sweating more than they are.*

Only when you've witnessed the prolonged periods of intensity that make Le Mans the challenge it is, do you understand the race's allure. Everyone has their own Everest to climb and until they've reached their summit, quitting isn't an option.

Porsche reached the pinnacle in 1970, when Dickie Attwood and Hans Herrmann took win number one in the iconic short-tailed 917. The company has continued to come back because the Porsche legend was born at Le Mans and

every victory has further immortalised the brand. That's why Porsche opted for sportscars over Formula One when they decided to return to top-level motorsport in 2014.

'It's not an F1 car,' says F1 star Nico Hulkenberg, who's been drafted in to lead the team's third car. 'But it's not far off F1 in terms of grip and power, which makes it fun to drive. You need to find a good rhythm and the great thing about the tyres is that you're able to push every single lap.'

A closer look at the 919 Hybrid's tech reveals that victory was always on the cards this year, if only they could make the car reliable. The 919 regenerates 8MJ of electrical energy per lap, which is more than key rivals Audi and Toyota, but its advantages are track-specific. Le Mans is the only circuit on the World Endurance Championship calendar that's long enough to allow the car to regenerate all 8MJ, which highlights where Porsche's priorities lie.

'The car is very quick around Le Mans,' says Mark Webber, now in his second season at Porsche after quitting F1. 'We saw that from the first lap at the test. But we also knew that Audi would be quick in race trim, so we took nothing for granted.'

The difference between being in the lighthouse or sh\*thouse at this race is very small; you need to be very disciplined and have a little bit of luck.'

You need luck because there are so many opportunities for things to go wrong. The cars are stressed at Le Mans like nowhere else; they make more than 25,000 seamless-shift gearchanges during the race, each one involving the cog being rammed home in less than 0.1sec, and the 3300 racing miles are hard ones. The long-life Michelin tyres allow the drivers to push every lap, smashing the car over the kerbs time and again.

Then there's traffic. Pole position this year was 48sec faster than the slowest GT car, which creates closing speeds between LMP1 and GT of up to 70mph. If the GTs haven't seen the faster cars, ▶



← Nico Hulkenberg with Kiwi Earl Bamber. Race winners in car 19





She's on pole at Le Mans, holding, fittingly, a pole



Romain Dumas, driver of pole-sitting car 18. He finished fifth



The goggles go down 30sec before the 919 enters the pitlane



'The difference between being in the lighthouse or the sh\*thouse at this race is very small'





## Webber's 37 hours of Le Mans

**8-8.15am**

Meeting with engineers

**9-9.45am**

Race morning warm-up. Mark is first up in car #17

**10-10.30am**

Technical debrief with the engineers

**10.30am-12pm**

R&R in his personal driver room. Temperatures in the cockpit peak at 27 degrees

**12pm**

Meet & greet in the Porsche hospitality suite. Former

Porsche winners Jacky Ickx, Derek Bell and Dickie Attwood are among the guests

**1.15-1.55pm**

Filming

**2pm**

Grid ceremony. Lots of interviews and glad-handing with, among others, French president Francois Hollande

**3pm**

Watch race start from the pit garage, then constantly keep in contact with the engineers

about Timo Bernhard's comments from the cockpit

**5pm**

Meet & greet in the hospitality suite

**5.30pm**

More meet & greets

**7.30pm**

Get changed into overalls and head



to pit garage. Before getting in the car, Mark weighs himself: 81.2kg

**8.24pm-11.44pm**

Quadruple racing stint on the same set of Michelin

tyres. Three re-fuelling stops included

**11.55pm**

Change, shower, massage

**12.15am**

Dinner. A mix of protein and a few carbs

**12.35am**

Interviews







**Porsche has assembled a 'snooze box' at the back of the paddock. Each driver has his own room**

#### 1.30am

Rest. In total Mark sleeps for 'a couple of hours'

#### 5am

Wake up, change into a dry set of overalls

#### 5.47am-9.12am

Another quadruple stint. As was the case before: the same set of

Michelins and three re-fuelling stops. Mark weighs 78.2kg - 3kg less than at the start of the race

#### 9.30am

Interviews

#### 9.35am

Shower and change

#### 9.50am

Breakfast

#### 10.30am

Interviews, at which point Mark daringly suggests: 'It's a Porsche 1-2; we're close to locking this one away'

#### 11.15am-12.15pm

Meet & greet guests

#### 2.30pm

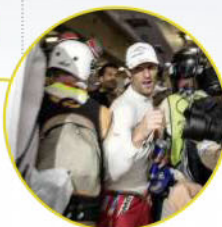
Head to the pit garage to watch the end of the race

#### 3pm

Race finish

#### 3.15pm

Podium celebrations then press conference



Each driver has his own seat, which he has to install himself in the heat of each pitstop



Timo Bernhard gets a pat on the back after a successful first stint



the smallest of misunderstandings can result in contact that takes both cars out of the race. Concentration is as important as race-craft round here. One lapse and it's over.

**THE ROADS LEADING** to Le Mans are a mess on race day. More than 50,000 Brits are blocking the main arteries from Calais, and 200,000 other race-goers are clogging up the *Routes Nationales*. Even those people arriving by air have no guarantee of a smooth arrival. For a period of six hours the airfield adjacent to the start-finish straight is busier than Heathrow; everywhere you look there is traffic chaos.

But it's happy chaos. People of different nationalities share coffees and sandwiches, and Porsche take the first PR victory of the weekend by handing out free merchandise. Photographs of 919 Hybrids are soon trading like Panini stickers.

'*Porsche 1-2-3 sur la grille de depart*' are the newspaper headlines, but the team is keeping the pace of its cars in perspective. 'It'll give us an advantage into Turn 1,' says Webber, the lead driver of car no.17, 'but this is a 24-hour race. All you want to do is get around Turn 1; it doesn't really matter where.'

As the 3pm start-time approaches, tension in the Porsche garage rises; everyone - from gaffer Wolfgang Hatz down - shows signs of nerves. It's a welcome shot of adrenaline because it's already been a long week. Practice and qualifying on Wednesday and Thursday nights, followed by thorough race preparations; this morning's 9am warm-up session ensures everyone is out of bed at dawn, ahead of 24 hours of racing.

'I think we have a race on our hands,' says Hulkenberg, who can't wipe the smile off his face. He's relishing the cars and the level playing field provided by the LMP1 rules: the cars are a minimum weight of 870kg, which is 168kg heavier than an F1 car, so Hulkenberg's 74kg frame is at less of a disadvantage than it is in F1.

'There's been a lot to get used to,' he adds, 'but the car is fun to drive. The biggest differences with F1 are the [lack of] visibility from the cockpit and the [Michelin] tyres. You can push on them for lap after lap, which is something I'm not used to. I'm also looking forward to driving at night; I enjoyed that during testing and it should be even more fun on this track.'

With such a long race in prospect, Porsche has assembled a 'snooze-box' at the back of the paddock. Each driver has his own room, although they are pretty sparse - each is equipped with a metal bed and a thin mattress, and not much more. There are also rest areas for other team members.

The start ceremony begins at 2pm, one hour before the off. The mechanics push the cars from the ▶

(in French, though nobody speaks it)

#### 4.30pm

Debrief with technical director Alex Hitzinger, and a brief look ahead to next year's car

#### 5.30pm

Beer

#### 10.30pm

Lights out



garage onto the grid, where they are lined up in a traditional fan formation. VIPs are two-a-penny: French president Francois Hollande causes the biggest stir, moving stealthily around the grid in a gaggle of security men.

The drivers pose for selfies, suck at their drinks' bottles and fidget. There's a jumpiness to them that isn't evident at more conventional races, but such is the sense of occasion at Le Mans. The prize is bigger, albeit not fiscally because the winning car gets just €40,000. The risks are also greater than elsewhere, and no-one knows that better than Webber. On his first visit to Le Mans in 1999 he cartwheeled out of the race warm-up after a catastrophic aerodynamic malfunction. 'You don't want to be looking at the sky here,' he says with a wry smile.

With half an hour to go, the grid begins to clear. The drivers who are starting the race get kitted up; everyone else, except the scattering of mechanics needed to start the car, returns to the pits, where each person has a designated place to stand or sit.

A new nose for each car sits in the pit garage and there are a host of other spares in a makeshift garage in the paddock. There's a spare chassis, six engines, six front gearboxes, six rear gearboxes, nine more front wings, nine rear wings and 80 wheels rims. The magnesium rims have been stacked carefully because they are expensive, but with reason. They have saved 20kg compared to the aluminium rims used last year.

At 3pm on the dot, pole-man Neel Jani leads the field across the start-finish straight. President Hollande waves a Tricolore to get the race underway, amid roars of delight in the grandstands. But the Porsche garage remains calm. There are a few nervous ramblings in German between the mechanics, but most people watch the TVs in silence, looking out for signs of trouble. At this stage of the race it's clear that a fear of failure motivates the team rather than the lure of success.

When the cars pass the pits at the end of lap one, the mechanics are stood down.

The message is relayed to them via radio and they relax by sitting on tool chests or in deck chairs; everyone is now waiting for the first re-fuelling stops on lap 13 (total: 30 for the race). Some walk to the kitchen at the back of the pit for a drink or a biscuit.

Over the radio, the engineers regularly ask the drivers about any set-up changes that might be needed at the next pitstop. All pits-to-car radio conversations are spoken in English and they're brief.

'More turn-in please.'

'Copy.'

The pitstops are super-efficient. Only when the cars are stationary are the mechanics allowed into the pitlane, but no more than two at a time. The pair changing tyres work around the car with the choreography of two ballet dancers, one working the gun and the other the wheels. If there's no driver change, a separate mechanic replaces his drinks' bottle later on and, when necessary, he rips off the windscreen's tear-off.

As the car accelerates back into the pitlane, the tyre changers usually embrace or high-five to celebrate a job well done. Unbelievably, given the intensity of the moment, they rarely make a mistake, but Porsche still rotates the pairs to give them time off.

So far, so good, but you have to expect the unexpected at Le Mans. 'You have to react to what's going on around you,' says ▶



**Driver change in the lead 919. Guy on the bonnet is ripping off the windscreen tear-off. Easier than cleaning!**



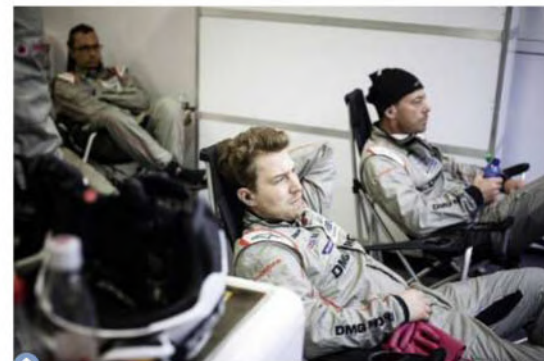
**Webber chills out after his quadruple night stint**



**Note to team manager: next year bring a clothes horse (carbonfibre, natch)**



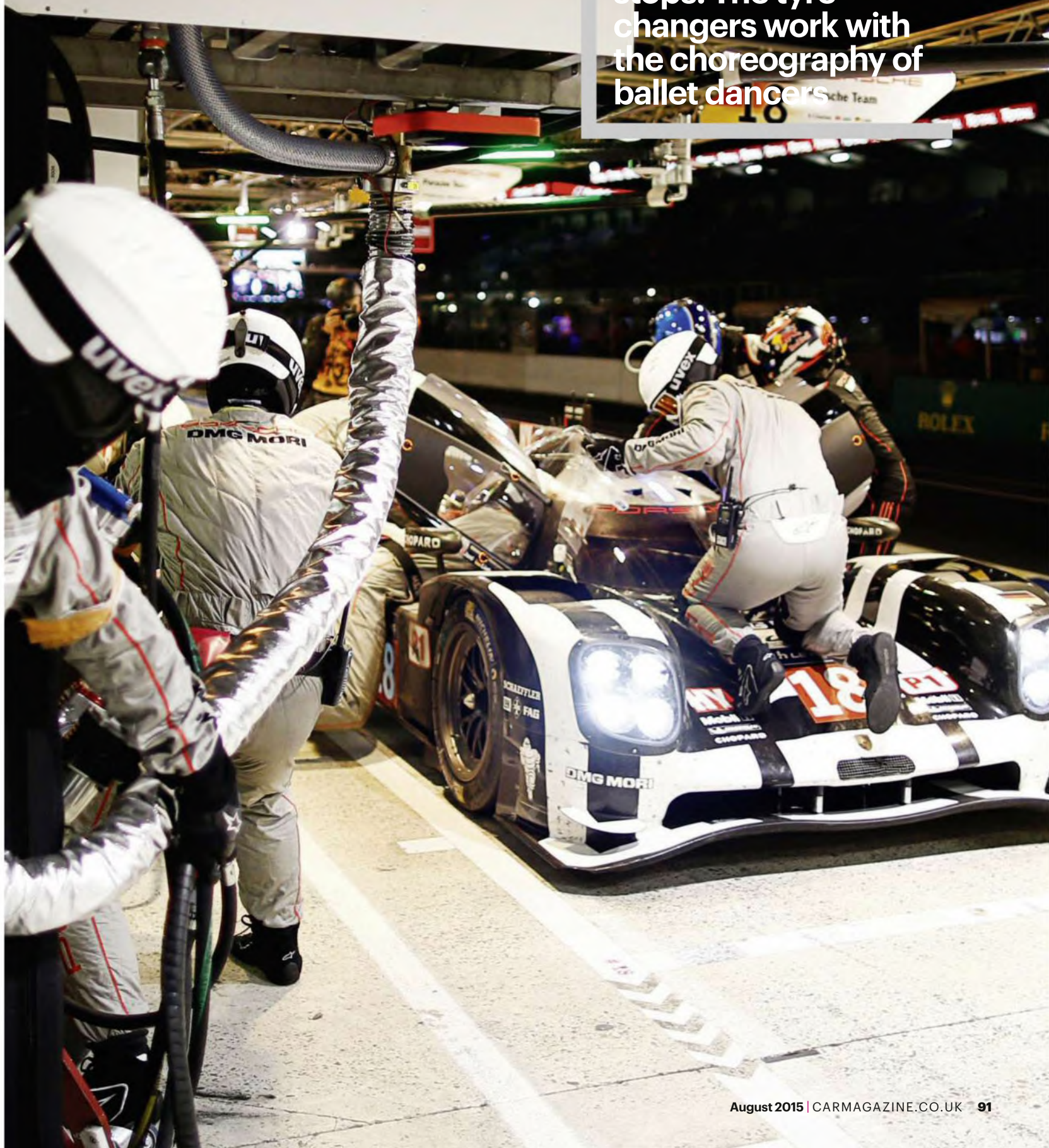
**Those Michelins. Drivers can lean on them hard, stint after stint. You hear that, Pirelli?**



**Watching the German Comedy Channel between pitstops?**



There are 30 refuelling stops. The tyre changers work with the choreography of ballet dancers







That's why they have three drivers – two wouldn't be enough to lift the trophy

Porsche technical director Alex Hitzinger. 'You can't rely on the computer; you need to make decisions on the pitwall, which is one of the many great things about this race.'

During the early hours of Sunday, Webber has to react to the unexpected as well. 'I was gunning it around the Porsche Curves and I almost hit a squirrel,' he said. 'You're on a pretty fixed line there, so it took an effort to miss him. I was worried about his heart rate for a while, but I missed him. He got away.'

In the end, the car with the blemish-free race is victorious. Hulkenberg guides the no.19 car over the line, completing a total of 8hrs 52mins behind the wheel – the most of the three winning drivers. But each has played his part: Briton Nick Tandy was majestic during the night and Kiwi Earl Bamber has been equally formidable during his two quadruple stints. The car runs faultlessly, bar a precautionary engine cover and rear wing change on Sunday morning, and it's won the race at an average speed of 139mph. Hulkenberg claims that the victory, his first since racing in GP2 in 2009, is the greatest achievement of his career. 'If I don't get a serious offer in F1 next year, I would think about sportscars, yes,' he says.

Technically the no.17 car of Webber, Hartley and Timo Bernhard is also faultless, but a yellow flag infringement by Brendon Hartley and subsequent one-minute penalty ends their intra-team challenge and by mid-morning Sunday the finishing order is set.

There are post-race hugs all round, and some tears. People feel worn out when the adrenaline stops and there are more tears when Dr Porsche makes an emotional speech to the throng of VIPs. Then it's party time: 'Tonight's gonna be a good night' blares out of the speakers and people embark on what looks like a second sleepless night. For the hospitality guys and gals, as well as the 16 chefs working behind the scenes, their work is not yet done.

But there's no sign of the drivers. After the podium celebrations and a press conference they are summoned by Hitzinger to the engineering truck. He wants to congratulate them and to have an initial look ahead to next season's car.



'I only said you could have a sip!' CAR's Tom fails to get his beer back from winning Brit Nick Tandy

'Yep, we've already had 15 minutes talking about next year's car,' says Webber. 'That's a bit [Adrian] Newey-esque, but that's what it's all about. There's an F1 mentality to this team now, which is great to see. We are strong, but we need to get stronger because we have weaknesses. There will be another step made by everyone next year and we need to make sure we're at the forefront of that.'

As I leave the garage, exhausted, it feels like I'm about the only one who'll bask in what's been achieved here in the last 24 hours. Everyone else is too busy planning for 2016.

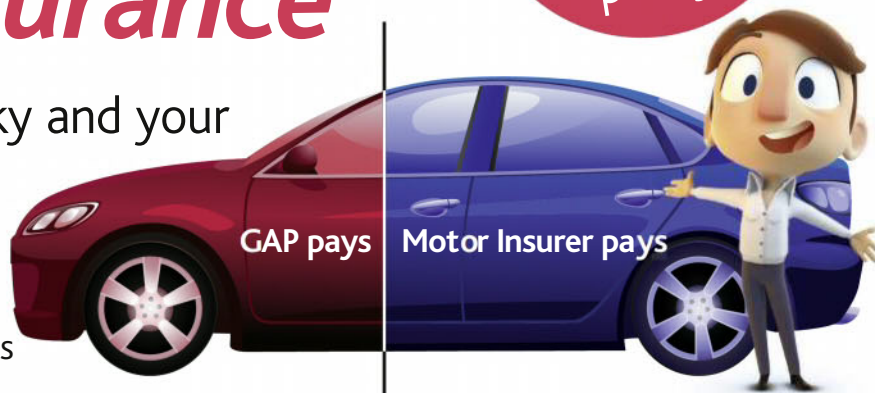
@TomClarksonF1



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# Thor's



↑  
BMW X5 xDrive  
25d M Sport



↑  
Range Rover Sport  
HSE Dynamic SDV6



# hammertime

That Volvo has named its LED light design after a Viking god says plenty about its cheeky confidence in the new XC90. Justified? Here's where we find out

Words CJ Hubbard Photography Charlie Magee

Volvo XC90 D5  
AWD Momentum











**THEY SAY THE** devil is in the details. Although, as is common with such matters, it appears that God got there first. The original phrase wasn't a warning against trickery akin to the Prince of Darkness, but a sort of religious encouragement that you should always do your best. God is in the detail, see. While it seems unlikely that any of this has anything to do with Norse mythology, that Volvo elected to name the new XC90's daytime running light signature 'Thor's Hammer' is nonetheless a detail I rather like. And is but one instance of the sheer attention to minutiae that has clearly been lavished on this very modern interpretation of the SUV. That not all of these intricacies are entirely beneficial just goes to prove the wisdom of whoever came up with the opening sentiment.

The stakes are particularly high because new XC90 is not only the follow-up to an SUV so well received it was still selling strongly when death finally reconfigured the production line 12 years after its original launch, but also quite literally the embodiment of new Volvo, the first fruit of the firm's own Chinese-backed labours since being freed from the chattels of Ford. That handsome face, punctuated by an illuminated double-homage to a divine smack-down tool and a more prominent version of the 'iron mark' logo, will soon be appearing across an entirely new range of Volvos, all based on the brand spanking Scalable Product Architecture (SPA) that debuts beneath the XC90's steely visage. This

every-which-way-resizable platform is the major output of an \$11bn investment programme, and comes packaged with stellar safety equipment and an interior rethink centred around a tablet-like touchscreen infotainment unit. In isolation, the new XC90 felt pretty hopeful; can the likely best-selling D5 turbodiesel engine bring the hammer down on a pair of key rivals?

Those rivals are the BMW X5 xDrive 25d and the Range Rover Sport SDV6 – chosen partly because they can both match the XC90's seven-seater accommodation (albeit via the options list), and partly because they both set standards for quality, lavishness and driving engagement that are at any given moment in danger of being labelled as benchmarks. Distinct image associations, too. With big talk of uniquely Scandinavian design heritage, 'true driving pleasure' and 'handcrafted' finishing touches – not to mention cranking up the price – Volvo isn't shying away from this kind of confrontation. That the previous XC90 was closely associated with yummy mummies on the public-school run provides a refreshing counterpoint to the overtly macho posturing typically allied with the other two, and if anything the broad strokes of the new XC90's exterior speak even more of a machine optimised for the safe urban transit of precious junior cargo. It certainly doesn't look as if it's about to go crashing about in the countryside. Owners won't. And we aren't.

Instead we're in Henley, and will later be heading over to Marlow, following a route that will take us out onto fast dual-carriageways and along narrow, winding B-roads, having already covered motorways to get here. The closest we'll ▶



XC90's bold new face will define the next wave of Volvos. Have to admit it looks minty fresh



come to a green lane is a gravel-topped scenic parking spot, judging this about as far off-road as most buyers will ever take these monsters. The ability to comfortably and confidently negotiate a high street choked with somnambulant shoppers and errant delivery drivers is a better test of this type of mettle (or metal) these days, for this has become their reality. Besides, if you do want to go crushing nature, the verdict is simple: buy the Range Rover Sport. Neither rival offers any pretence of such aptitude; being loaded to the gunwales with

super-articulating axles and off-road electronics is one of the reasons the Range Sport is more expensive.

All three look perfectly at home parked outside the Henley rowing museum. But the BMW is easily the least... *obvious*. As with the Volvo, this example is propelled by a modest 2.0-litre turbodiesel, and with 215bhp is the least powerful vehicle in the test. Even with the body addenda included with the increasingly default M Sport trim level it seems somehow demur – despite being bigger in every dimension than its squat and muscular predecessor it appears much less arrogant and self-aggrandising. It's almost as if this 4x4 is trying to apologise for itself; the 19in alloys look undersized, and it has by far the most discernible and technical aerodynamic elements. You can see daylight through both sides of the front wheelarches, as the engineers have sought to create Air Cushions

and use Air Breathers (the vents behind the front wheels) to minimise its physical disruption of the environment. It's at once dull and highly considered, with little to draw you in after a cursory glance, a theme that continues on the inside with an interior so typically BMW you lose interest almost as soon as you've registered it. Amazing that a car this large can be trying so hard not to be noticed.

Attempted invisibility is not an accusation anyone is likely to aim at the Range Rover Sport. Representing the breed on this occasion is *CAR*'s own long-term, which means it has the smallest engine currently on offer – a 3.0-litre V6 turbodiesel, nevertheless 50% greater in capacity than *anything* available in the Volvo – and HSE Dynamic specification. This middle-ranking trim takes the necessary stockpile of funds even further from the other two but means this Range, which at 2115kg remains the heaviest of our trio in spite of its aluminium construction, comes equipped with the Dynamic Response active anti-roll-bar system, the better to test the XC90's 'driving pleasure' claim. That our car also looks as if it's been specced by someone with 'seek counselling'-grade Colombian pharmaceutical distribution fantasies does little to alleviate the sensation that you're driving something many people despise. You're immediately the villain in one of these.

It's lucky the windows are tinted, not least because it's more difficult for animal rights protestors to see the crimes against bovinity inside. Stirring though it is to climb up – noticeably more so than in the others – into a cabin so swathed in leather you can't help thinking of steak dinners, this is a type of luxury that feels rather old-school to me. There's no doubting the base quality: the real metal is cool to the touch, the hide soft and inviting, and there's an impressively befuddling array of Terrain Response options to choose from. Yet the more everyday technology is outmoded and under-thought. ▶

### KEY TECH: XC90 Safe as... Volvos



Volvo's obsession with safety reaches new heights in the XC90. Not only will it spot pedestrians and cyclists, it displays speed limits so prominently it's surely only a matter of time before it starts issuing its own Fixed Penalty Notices. Two new systems also feature: a 'run-off road protection package' and 'intersection auto brake'. The former detects if you've left the tarmac and are about to plummet into the scenery, tightening the belts. The latter applies the brakes if it thinks you're about to pull out in front of on-coming traffic.

### Poor, on reflection

Smallest screen here features dated and muddled homescreen and slightly crappy nav maps. Luckily, when it's sunny you can't read anything on screen due to epic reflections from panoramic glass roof

Optional multi-view external camera system a bit gimmicky but reassuring with these bus-like proportions to manoeuvre

### Sorry, cows

We only have ourselves to blame, since this is our long-term, but somewhere in the world there's an empty field that used to be full of brown cows. Seats, and materials in general, are imperious





### Take one tablet

Tablet-like screen is biggest this side of a Tesla, and Volvo has trusted it with almost every function. Feels slightly under-developed and forces you to take your eyes off the road too much

### 2 shades of grey

No S&M eroticism here – it's a Volvo, and we're 48 shades short – but the pale hide, modern surfaces and blonde wood veneers combine with a Kew Gardens-spec glasshouse to make it feel very airy

▶ Nav maps fail to maximise potential of big screen. But its presence makes cabin feel button-free



### The iDrive has it

BMW's iDrive was the first system of its kind, and has evolved to near perfection. Works even better with optional head-up display, pitching guidance, audio and phonebook intel into your eyeline

### Dark matter

It may be darker than a Scandinavian dramatist's imagination but BMW cabins are built for the job of driving. Tactile wheel, slick gear paddles and super seats gel like the Barcelona midfield

▶ Adaptive M suspension: continuously variable dampers and self-levelling air springs. Press the up arrow





Much higher off the ground than the others. You don't step out, you fall

## Where the Volvo and BMW shrink around you, the Range Sport feels enormous

The central touchscreen is the smallest on test, has a cluttered homescreen, features the world's ugliest mapping software and is angled to such an unfortunate degree that unshading the optional panoramic glass roof renders it unusable on sunny days due to the glare. The equally optional multi-view external camera system is also exciting in principle, but the optical hardware is in desperate need of an upgrade – the clarity and resolution of the X5's (equally optional) reversing camera makes the system seem as sharp as recordings of the moon landings.

No doubt the country club ambience of the Range Rover Sport has plenty of appeal to plenty of punters, but the Volvo still throws it into relief. Inside this XC90 all is light and airy, with a colour palette dominated by blonde wood veneers and ever-paler shades of grey, oh so much space, and the sleek 12.3in portrait-format touchscreen interface sitting almost entirely alone in the middle of the dashboard. There is no cleaner interior design this side of a Tesla, and you approach the XC90 eager to find out if a mainstream manufacturer can possibly have grasped such a contemporary, minimalist concept with anywhere near the same degree of success. More fuel to that fire comes when you learn CAR's own elder statesman, Gavin Green, has described the XC90's cabin as the finest this side of a Rolls-Royce or Bentley.

I'm not so convinced. Perhaps it's because this car is in entry-level Momentum rather than highfalutin Inscription specification, but there's almost immediately a sense that the quality goes little deeper than those fancy veneers. The 'diamond-cut' control knobs for the stereo volume and the starter switch seem a touch flimsy in this company, and while the reaction to reduce the number of buttons is highly

commendable (the pre-SPA generation of Volvos surely used up the firm's quota for this century anyway), demoting almost every interior function to touchscreen remains a contentious decision. Adjusting the climate control, for example, has been thoroughly considered – you rarely need more than one stab at the relevant screen real estate – but still requires your eyes to linger longer away from the road than traditional solutions. Other elements of the interface suggest the engineers didn't quite know what to do with the system once they'd come up with it. The digital 'buttons' are big and clear, and you can swipe and pinch and scroll very easily, yet you can't always get to the information you're after. With a screen this large and an interface this clever, why doesn't there seem to be an obvious way to display the 'now playing' information from the

digital radio, for instance? In daily use, unresolved details like this become disproportionately irritating; to be fair, the Range Rover doesn't do a great job of this sort of thing either.

Irritating is also an appropriate word for the Volvo's ride. This is the first new XC90 that we've driven on the standard steel-sprung suspension – all-round electronically controlled air suspension is a £2150 extra – and it's fidgety and thumpy in a manner that again suggests a lack of true depth beneath the shiny surface. It doesn't *thunk* into potholes so much as *twang*, and although the initial turn-in is keen, the resulting body roll doesn't quite keep up that opening promise. Still, the light steering seems to suit the new-age character of the rest of the car, and it doesn't want for actual accuracy. Widest of the three, the XC90 is effortlessly positioned, doesn't make you nervous when facing on-coming country lane traffic, and – aside from the ride – excels around town. As the least heavy ('lightest' seems inapt for a two-tonne behemoth) it delivers determined progress via its 222bhp, but you do miss the revvy zing of the less powerful BMW and the laid-back muscle of the bigger-lunged Range Sport. And occasionally curse the lack of standard-fit paddleshifters.

Where the Volvo – and exceptionally the BMW – will do the magic trick of shrinking around you, the Range Rover Sport never feels anything less than flinch-inducingly enormous. Despite that larger engine, the seriously clever chassis tech and standard air suspension which provides an extremely assured ride (if not a flawless one, given the optional 22s), it is strangely ponderous in many circumstances. The long-travel throttle pedal demands a determined prod when pulling away from standstill that somehow defies finesse, and being seated so obviously higher than in the others only conspires to make you overly conscious of its width and more prone to rolling sensations – though in fact the body control is very good, as is the fluidity of the steering. There's also no denying how safe and secure you feel, lording it over everybody. Which, given the Range Rover is way behind the others in terms of active safety aids, is perhaps ironic; you'll be doing your own pedestrian detection here. ▶

BMW's invisibility cloak design makes two-tonne X5 incredibly understated. Might be better if it actually was invisible





XC90 makes Range Sport look a bit dated. Don't tell Gerry McGovern



## KEY TECH: BMW X5 Man/machine

That BMW still doesn't offer a touchscreen (and won't until the new 7-series) seems wildly anachronistic, yet iDrive is now so easy to use you never miss it – just twirl, nudge and click the rotary controller without even glancing down. The numbered buttons above this on the centre stack aren't just for radio stations, they can be programmed with in-car instructions, including nav destinations, while a simple rocker switch accesses the different drive modes (from EcoPro to Sport+). But it's the £995 full-colour head-up display that really steals the show. Together: what a combo!





## KEY TECH: RANGE SPORT Let's off-road!



If you want to go off-roading you want the Range Rover. 260mm front and 272mm rear wheel travel – easily best in class – deliver 546mm of total wheel articulation. Standard air suspension now offers ground clearance of up to 278mm (up 51mm) and a 185mm range of adjustment. At the same time a new Dynamic Response setting counteracts body roll on the road; together with torque vectoring and an active rear locking diff it's impressive on the way to the swamp, not just wading through it (up to depths of 850mm).

There aren't any losers pictured here. All three are awesome in their way. But on a B-road or a Nürburgring, only one will do



So what of the X5? It has none of the others' visual flash inside or out, subconsciously dismissing it into third place until you finally get in and start using it. The engine is the sweetest of the lot – and that's ahead of an upgrade to a new 228bhp 'modular cylinder' unit later this year – belying its small size with the assistance of BMW's Sport variant of the eight-speed ZF gearbox, a version of which is also fitted in the Range (the Volvo uses an Aisin Warner 'box). BMW makes the gearbox work that bit better, the snappier paddle-actuated downchanges a case in point, especially when you're weapons hot on approach to a roundabout. Such tomfoolery also immediately fortifies your X5-buying decision to downsize from a six-cylinder anvil – the four-pot X5 isn't as instantly keen to change direction as the XC90 but is much more convincing once you're committed to the turn. Neither competitor can

match the poise of the M Sport trim's standard Adaptive M suspension, which combines continuously variable damping with self-levelling air springs at the rear. The resulting ride in Normal isn't so much firm as authoritative, the subframes seemingly superbly isolated from the body structure; it never irritates in the manner of the Volvo because it's ace in the corners – the Sport settings only extend this agility. Wind it up, and this 2040kg heavyweight flies.

There's more to the X5 than driving, though. The interior may be the most predictable and least ocularly arresting, but my goodness it works well. The highly evolved iDrive and the user-configurable buttons on the centre console are reason enough for enduring long-term satisfaction; the first time you see detailed lane-guidance navigation appear in the vast head-up display you'll know it's love. Okay, the HUD is a £995 option (Volvo's alternative – not tested – costs £1000), but the latest iteration's ability to project telephone contact lists and infotainment data directly into your field of view tells you BMW's got the whole human/machine interface immensely sussed. What's more, available safety kit isn't far off Volvo levels – beyond it when it comes to Night Vision technology – and there isn't a single aspect of the internal build quality that makes you go *urgh*. The X5 also retains a split tailgate, making it the only contender to give you somewhere to sit while changing your wellies.

In the end, each of these SUVs could justify top billing, and any one might prove the perfect solution for your particular circumstances. The new XC90 is smart, clean-cut and ultra-modern – and while neither rival is short on interior space, it's the Volvo that's truly cavernous, up to and including the standard third-row seating designed for 1.7m tall adults, not just children. The Range Rover Sport has the image, and the pizzazz, and the astonishing multi-terrain proficiency – and you will never feel short-changed by its appropriately weighty showroom value. In this company, the BMW is the least outright desirable, but with the thoughtful exorciation of its previously heavy-handed physical presence, the brilliant user-friendliness of its cockpit, and the fantastic togetherness of its driving experience, it doesn't half sneak up on you. It might not be cool, but as the most complete package the X5 entirely deserves the overall honours. **car**

@ir\_427

## 2nd

Looking fresher than an M&S éclair and with more space inside than a lwb Tardis, the XC90 comes close. Shame it rides like a novice cowboy

## 3rd

It feels odd placing it third, when it's more desirable than the others, even if they came with Michelle Keegan as standard. But, *but...*

## 1st

Like Novak Djokovic, the German football team and the Porsche 911, the X5 looks vulnerable to new rivals, then goes and beats them all





## Volvo XC90 D5 AWD Momentum

**Price** £45,750 **Price as tested** £51,715

**Transmission**  
8-speed automatic, 4wd

**Engine**  
1969cc  
16v 4-cyl turbodiesel

**Suspension**  
Double wishbone front, integral axle with transverse leaf spring rear



**Made of** steel

## BMW X5 xDrive 25d M Sport

**Price** £49,790 **Price as tested** £54,750

**Transmission**  
8-speed automatic, 4wd

**Engine**  
1995cc  
16v 4-cyl turbodiesel

**Suspension**  
Double track control arm front, self-levelling air springs rear



**Made of** steel

## Range Rover Sport HSE Dynamic SDV6

**Price** £66,250 **Price as tested** £75,607

**Transmission**  
8-speed automatic, 4wd

**Engine**  
2993cc  
24v V6 turbodiesel

**Suspension**  
SLA with twin lower links front, integral link rear, air springs



**Made of** aluminium

### Power & torque

**We say:** Range Sport has the biggest engine, hence is the most powerful. *Duh!*



347lb ft @ 1750rpm

222bhp @ 4250rpm



332lb ft @ 1500rpm

215bhp @ 4400rpm



516lb ft @ 1500rpm

302bhp @ 4000rpm

### Weight

**We say:** SPA platform Volvo lightest; aluminium Range Sport heaviest



2009kg



2040kg



2115kg

### Power-to-weight

**We say:** Range Sport monsters the others. Hulk smash, etc



**Volvo**  
110.5bhp per tonne



**BMW**  
105.4bhp per tonne

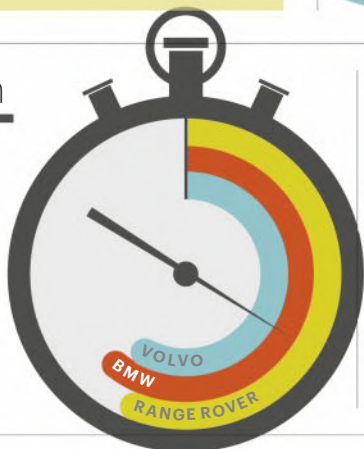


**Range Rover**  
142.8bhp per tonne

### 0-62mph

**We say:** Two tonnes plus yet all are at least 1.0sec faster to 62mph than a Mk1 Golf GTI

**Volvo 7.8sec**  
**BMW 8.2sec**  
**Range Rover 7.2sec**



### Top speed

**We say:** Aerodynamics 1, SUVs 0 – not even all that extra bhp makes a dent



137mph



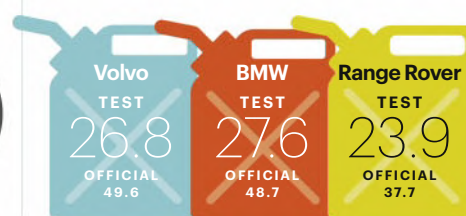
137mph



138mph

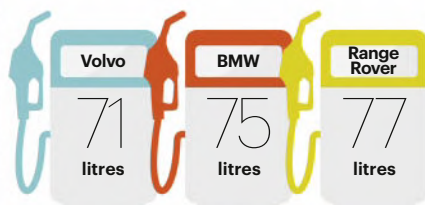
### Official & test mpg

**We say:** BMW proves least thirsty, but Range Sport is closest to official figure



### Fuel tank

**We say:** More powerful versions of the Range Sport pack in 105 litres



### Range

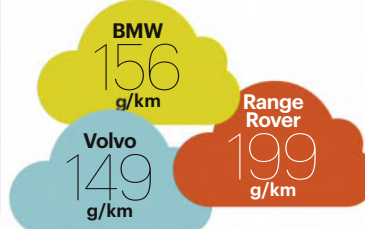
**We say:** Based on test mpg, X5 goes up to 50 miles further between fill-ups

**Volvo: 418miles**  
**BMW: 455miles**  
**Range Rover: 405miles**



### CO2

**We say:** XC90 is £120 cheaper to tax than the Range Sport thanks to official CO2



### Lease rates

**We say:** Range Sport's status draws a premium; BMW a bargain?

**£656**  
(48 months, 10k miles/year, £3937 initial payment)

**£593**  
(48 months, 10k miles/year, £3558 initial payment)

**£907**  
(48 months, 10k miles/year, £5442 initial payment)





Words Chris Chilton Photography Richard Pardon

**Ariel, those crazy guys behind the Atom, have built a car called Nomad that seems to be able to fly. It can also climb mountains, ford rivers and monster B-roads. We drive it**

# NOMAD





# ADVENTURES



**IMAGINE BEING STRAPPED** into a sinking dinghy with a 235bhp VTEC outboard motor thrusting you to your doom. Water pours into the cockpit like you've just taken a U-boat hit and then struck an iceberg for good measure. Gallons of the stuff fills the moulded floor like a bath. And then your shoes. And then your pants. Your brain is telling you to climb the hell out of there, but the four-point harness has other ideas.

I've driven cars through massive water hazards before but they've mostly been shiny Jeeps and Range Rovers, and the water stays firmly on the outside, even when it's up to bonnet level. But the familiar tube chassis and the shockingly open sides are telling me I'm in an Ariel Atom. This can't end well.

But I haven't spun into the lake at Mallory Park in the middle of a track day, and this is no Atom. This is the Ariel Nomad. And there's almost nothing it can't do. We've become used to the absurdity of cars such as the Range Rover Sport SVR, a machine built to drive through rivers trained to lap tracks. Now meet a car designed for the circuit that's reimagined for the swamp.

Today's swamp is actually the remnants of an old coalmine near Glynneath in south Wales. It's called Walters Arena, after the Walters Group engineering giant that owns it, but you can forget about fancy grandstands and hospitality suites. This place is as earthy as boyo-done-good Dai Walters himself. Earthy and woody and muddy and 3000 acres of bloody brilliant playground that's used by everyone from

Land Rover's development team to rally teams looking to find that last tenth on next week's stage.

In fact, it's all rather over-awing. The place is so vast and the car such an oddball, that I don't really know where to start. Can the Nomad really climb that near-vertical-looking slope? Traverse that terrifying wall of rocks? Be so uncomfortable on my bony back that I feel like I've just donated a dog's dinner's worth of bone marrow? Tick, tick, tick!

Before we get muddy though, it's worth taking a look under the Nomad's skin, or it would be if it had one. Although the Nomad looks at a glance like nothing more than an Atom with a chassis structure extended to provide an enclosed passenger cell, the two have little in common. You still get a mid-rear-mounted four-cylinder engine, but it's an entirely different motor. And you still get an aluminium-tube chassis, but it's completely reconfigured to incorporate two half-moon spans that make up an upper cage structure, and cut lower at the flanks to make it possible to climb in. Some things never change though. A windscreen is optional and there's nothing so unseemly as doors or side glass, although you can specify a kind of burqa that drapes over the roof and sides to keep the cold and rain out.

Even with the detachable steering wheel removed, it's not easy to thread yourself through the gap between the roof bars and sill. I'm advised to go feet first and not worry about getting the wipe-clean seats dirty for reasons that soon become clear. Once inside, it's broadly familiar Atom territory. There's a vestigial ▶

**It's only when the water enters your trousers that this seems a bad idea**







Mud Terrain tyres give phenomenal grip. Still, best not to stand right behind a Nomad when the driver floors it on gravel



With no doors you'd have thought it would be easy to climb into. You'd be wrong





dash featuring an LCD display, a smattering of small, unmarked switches, and that's pretty much your lot. A dainty gear lever like an unopened tulip sprouts from the floor, just like in an Atom, but this time there's something new towering above: a giant rally-style vertically-mounted hydraulic handbrake lever.

● **Shattered and shat on – our Chris lives the (slightly disturbing) Nomad dream**

When the engine fires it sends a familiar barrage of Atom-like fizzles through the structure to every contact area. But a short shift to second and prod of right pedal reveals a massively different character. Instead of the 2.0-litre Honda VTEC engine fitted to UK Atoms, the Nomad uses the 2.4-litre four fitted to Atoms sold in the US. You swap the screaming top-end drama of the old K20Z for a more sedate sub-8000rpm limit, but torque shoots up by nearly 50lb ft to 221lb ft, almost the same as the old supercharged Atom made. And that's a sensible trade if you want to cut it off-road, particularly given that at 670kg (nearer 720kg with our car's extras), the Nomad's chunkier wheels, new chassis and revised suspension bring an extra 150kg of ballast.

The other big shock if you've never driven an Ariel, or like me, not recently, is the sight of the road and the suspension through the body of the car. It's like driving a Westfield while wearing X-ray specs and absolutely mesmerising seeing the oily bits in action. And the muddy bits. I've brought along a motocross helmet and goggles primarily because I thought they'd look good in the pictures and am certain I won't need them with our car's optional screen. Er, wrong. Every time I crank the wheel right, the road wheels fire a barrage of brown slop at my face through the lattice of the chassis. Never mind getting close to the action. I can quite literally taste it.

Powering through the network of connecting roads, the sheer amount of grip on offer is staggering. We're wearing balloon-like BF Goodrich Mud Terrain tyres, the kind of thing you get on a Defender, and they are physics-bendingly brilliant

## Nomad laid bare:

It doesn't have a skin, but here's what's under it

### BODY PANELS

The Nomad is mostly skeleton and not much skin. Think almost completely decayed corpse, but without the stink. But the options list lets you choose colours for the front and rear plastic panels, or even to swap them for carbon alternatives.

### WINCH

Even a Nomad is going to get stuck on occasion, so you might want to splash out on the front-mounted winch. Built by WARN, a big player in serious off-road kit, it costs £594 and can be operated remotely, but you'll have to order the front-bumper recovery bar too.

### BRAKES

An off-the-peg Nomad comes with 240mm vented discs, a tasty Tilton aluminium pedal box and twin master cylinders with an adjustable brake bias. For more dough you can add 290mm discs and four-pot calipers (£2388), a remote brake bias controller (£172) and that brilliant hydraulic handbrake for some proper Seb Loeb-style 180s.

in the rough, delivering incredible drive out of bends and huge mechanical grip when braking into them. On tighter corners a tug on that giant one-armed-bandit limb of a handbrake tucks the nose in, but to really string the faster bits together you need to get the weight moving and set the car up for each curve. So you tread on and off the accelerator like a 19th-century seamstress going full-chat on her sewing machine, getting the front tyres to tuck in and sending the back free as you come off the gas and jink the wheel simultaneously.

Rally-stuff done, we look for something more challenging, tick off the terrifying mud bath we opened with, then try a jump. I don't know much about jumping cars off-road but there are loads of ready-made jumps so I pick one, unwittingly take off from the wrong side, and soar through the air, landing with a thump that would send the struts through the ▶



**What's the Nomad for? Come on, how many cars can do this? Off road? At speed?**



### SEATS

Standard seats are made from woven composite cloth and can be adjusted through five fore/aft positions (with a spanner, no electric memory pampering here). They can be upgraded to carbon buckets, and the standard four-point harnesses to wider FIA spec versions (£142). Add a competition-approved plumbed-in fire extinguisher (£392) for extra peace of mind.

### WINDSCREEN

It comes without a screen as standard, but you can add a pair of aero screens, a full-size single, and even a heated screen, which is apparently handy when water is very likely to end up swilling around in the floor. There are no doors or roof, but Ariel does offer a canvas smock which keeps the rain and mud out.

### BUMPERS

We can't think of any other cars that list bumpers as optional extras, but they'll minimise damage if you have a spill on or off-road. Yours for £1025. Other optional body treats include a locking filler cap (oh, the luxury, and only £22), spare wheel and carrier, and a roof-mounted light setup (£1198).

### SUSPENSION AND TYRES

You'll need to work out what you're going to do with your Nomad before choosing the rubber. Ariel offers everything from proper 15in off-road tyres to 18in road boots and even genuine rally-spec rubber. Stock suspension can be boosted with Bilstein (£3496) or Ohlins (£5295) dampers, and negative camber wishbones.

### ROAD PACK

Surprisingly heavy demand for a pure off-road toy means a standard £33k Nomad is not road legal. To cover the black bits between the brown, you'll need the £2379 Road Pack, which comprises a full front and rear light setup, number plates and lights, catalytic converter and mudguards all round.





## Nomad: what were they thinking?

'We're always thinking about what we can do next,' says Ariel's manager Henry Siebert-Saunders, explaining the Atom's transformation into the Nomad. 'Quite a few of us here are into off-roading, both on two and four wheels and there seemed to be a gap in the market. We stuck some knobbly tyres on an Atom at the start of the project, took it down a local green lane and it turned out better than we expected.'

'The question I'm asked most is "what's it for?"' he says, beating us to it. 'And I tell people that you can do anything in it. There are other buggies out there, like the Polaris and Rage, but they're not dual-purpose machines like ours.'

Development began in late 2010, around the same time that Ariel started work on its incredible Ace motorbike, something boss Simon Saunders has been wanting to do for years, and the first

three of which are in production now. Last year Ariel made 65 Atoms. When all three model lines are up to speed it expects to make a similar number of Atoms, another 60-70 Nomads and a further 70 bikes. Little wonder the payroll has swollen recently with the addition of new engineers and technicians.

What's next? 'We're busy working on a supercharged Nomad that'll join the range later this year.'

inner wings if this were a regular car. But the Nomad soaks it up and the other dozen air-grabs we make throughout the rest of the day. This is one tough buggy.

It's not that there aren't vehicles that can do this stuff; it's just that it feels so wrong doing it from behind the wheel of what still feels like an Atom. Wading through water almost half a metre deep, crawling over boulders that you're sure will be gouging their way through the floorpan any minute. Scrambling up gigantic earth mounds that'd make a soft-roader wince. It's a total find-muck.

And it's absolutely exhausting. Shattered and shat-on, I kill the engine, remove my mud-soaked waterproofs, helmet and goggles, and get ready to venture out onto the road. I twist the wheel to the right, pull away, and immediately take a clod of earth to the forehead. This is a car that throws up lots of surprises, and other stuff too. But has it got any surprises in store in the nearby Brecon Beacons, on the kind of roads its Atom sister could have been made for?

We switch keys so often in this job, jumping from super-





mini to supercar that you get used to the open-mouthed stares and cameraphone barrage. But tooling through a sleepy town like Upper Brynaman in a mud-splattered freak of a car that looks like it just took a 5000-mile wrong turn in the Baja 500 is a recipe for attention like no other.

That torquey engine makes itself useful again, letting you trickle in higher gears, and squeezing you back into the moulded seat when the A4069 opens out heading due north. But that squeeze isn't as acute as it is in an Atom. Ariel says the 0-60mph time is 3.4sec, up from 3.1sec, while the 0-100mph sprint now takes 8.7sec, not 7.8sec, and the (academic in one of these) top speed is slashed by a massive 20mph to 125mph.

Let's get some perspective on this though. The Nomad is still a match for almost anything you're likely to come across on the road, and even if you've lost some of that top-end bite, the roar as air gets hoovered into those combustion chambers is more than fierce enough.

The scenery feels vast up here, but the road to Llangadog itself is deceptively narrow in places, narrow enough to force you to think far more about your position when facing an oncoming car mid-bend than you would in an almost 300mm narrower Caterham. And the Nomad's taller scuttle compared with an Atom and those new A-pillars makes it harder to see the car's corners, and consequently place it on the road. ▶



We got the 'Chilton not covered in crap' shot in the can early. Handbrake from Sherman tank parts bin?



Mud tyres not ideal for the road – or are they? Rears let go with a rather pleasing frequency



Suspension quite conventional, except that it's outboard and you can watch it working



## The big drive: Ariel Nomad

But it is still laugh-out-loud hilarious to drive. Not as sharp on its off-road rubber and more conventional strut suspension (rather than a fancy rose-jointed in-board setup), but still massively entertaining. And in fact, though other more road-biased tyres are available, those Mud Terrain boots only add to the mischief, the rears gently letting go as you brake heavily into corners, and spinning up freely with a manic whine if you give it the beans on the exit.

Even with that screen in place your head takes a bit of a pounding. It's cold up here on the Black Mountain and while I'm toing and froing for photography I quickly graduate from sunglasses to goggles, and then to goggles and helmet, to keep my face warm as much as anything else. But properly equipped with lid, gloves and a decent outdoor coat, I'm ready for anything. And so is the car. Every so often I'll spot something off in the moorland and suddenly remember that there's nothing but a respect for Wales's National Park preventing me from veering right off the tarmac and into the scenery to investigate. That notion might not seem strange if your daily steer is a Range Rover. But it probably hasn't crossed many Atom owners' minds.

Now, it can. The Nomad is a fascinating, ludicrous machine. How good it is, is not in doubt, but perhaps you're wondering: *why?* What's it for, exactly? As a specialist track-day toy, the Atom makes perfect sense, but the Nomad is a little more confused. With the right tyres it can do the circuit stuff too, but with that extra weight and less track-focused suspension design, almost certainly not as well. And impressive as it proved off-road, it's never going to be as adept as something like a Defender, with its four-wheel drive and vastly more generous ground clearance.



As good for viewing the scenery as for traversing it. Chilton ponders the possibility that a new genre has been invented



Love the fact that Nomad, like Atom, wears every bolt on its sleeve. Cleaning it, of course, is another matter

Genuinely new ideas confuse people. Back in 1987 before track day supercars were all the rage, we called the stripped-bare but competition-ineligible Ferrari F40 insincere. Now it's revered as one of the greatest supercars ever. That's not going to happen to the Nomad, and maybe you can't see Ariel's misfit slotting into your life. But imagine living in the wiles of southern California with miles of desert at your disposal, or, if things go Ariel's way, flicking on the TV to see a one-make series where a gaggle of the things are belting round a rallycross track switching effortlessly from soil to circuit. Suddenly this incredible creation, an all-star decathlete to the Atom's dedicated sprinter, starts to make sense. Or as much sense as anything that comes from the brilliantly unhinged minds at Ariel ever does.

@chrischiltoncar

### ARIEL NOMAD

**Price** £33,000

**As tested** £50,000

**Engine** 2354cc 16v 4cyl, 235bhp @ 7200rpm, 221lb ft @ 4300rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

**Suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, outboard dampers front and rear

**Performance** 3.4sec 0-60mph (not 62mph), 125mph

**Length/width/height** 3215/1850/1425mm

**Weight/made from** 670kg, aluminium/plastic

**Rating** ★★★★★







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A high-angle, low-perspective shot of a bright blue Lamborghini sports car, likely a Gallardo, driving on a city street. The car is in motion, with a blurred background of a building and a street. The car's sleek, aerodynamic design is highlighted by the bright blue paint and the motion blur.

Words Georg Kacher Photography Wolfgang Spaccarelli

# Propulsio

That's hybrid in Lamborghini-speak, and you better get used to it. Last year's radical





# ne ibrido!

Asterion concept has evolved into a second-gen mule called Tosca. We drive them both



**L**AMBORGHINI'S FUTURE looks much better than it sounds. I know because I'm driving it. I'm behind the wheel of what looks like an orange Aventador doing 60mph, but instead of the crackle and pop of a straining-to-be-unleashed V12 all I can hear is what sounds like the whirr of a tramcar, or a hummingbird crossed with a bumblebee. As our speed climbs to a still-silent 75mph and the analogue rev

counter continues to read zero, Lambo's r&d chief Maurizio Reggiani, sitting next to me, grins like a schoolboy.

This still secret *muletto* is nicknamed Tosca, perhaps because of the amazingly polyphonic Puccini-esque soundtrack. It is one of exactly one plug-in hybrid prototypes Lamborghini is nursing on a shoestring budget, as it seeks options for its next generation of sports cars. Nothing has been decided – first there's the small matter of the Urus SUV to launch – but Tosca, with its three electric motors mated to a 5.2-litre V10 petrol engine, is very much at the vanguard of current progress. It is, effectively, the Mk2 version of the Asterion concept car (the blue car here), which made the brand's hybrid ambitions public at last year's Paris show.

We pull in to the town square of Sant'Agata Bolognese, just around the corner from the Lamborghini factory, and park Tosca next to Asterion. Also on hand, to remind us where Lambo is right now and also where its heart has always been, is the new Aventador SV – the pinnacle of the conventional supercar engineering from which the company must inevitably deviate. It's a shame Charles Darwin couldn't be here to log the moment.

The Asterion is a very different kind of Lambo. Not only because of its futuristic drivetrain but also because of its softer, less aggressive looks – despite minor Miura overtones from certain angles. 'We did not want to create a shape that is even more extreme than Huracan or Aventador,' explains chief designer Filippo Perini. 'This car points in a direction which is new for us. It is less about acceleration

and top speed and more about environment-friendliness. Although the trademark cues are still easy to spot, the architecture has been heavily modified.' Unlike the marque's flagship model, Asterion and Tosca make do without the classic V12. Why? Because r&d had all hands full to accommodate three electric motors adding 300bhp to the tally, as well as the complex 200kg battery pack that feeds them. At any rate, the combined power output of 902bhp eclipses even the highly strung and much more aggressive 740bhp Aventador SV.

The interior, too, reflects the user-friendly character of the LPI 910-4 concept (that's Asterion's suffix, indicating 910ps). Instead of panoramically applied black alcantara, carbonfibre overload, sadomaso seats and Pachinko-in-Roppongi instruments, Perini and his team opted for ivory over saddle-brown leather, bespoke dials and sparse aluminium accents. The Asterion must be the roomiest Lamborghini since the archaic LM002. The visibility is quite good, too, the main controls are logically arranged, and the comfy chairs won't punish you for last night's second helpings. Under a hexagonal glass pane reinforced by a Y-pattern *leitmotif* carbonfibre structure lurks the nicely dressed-up V10 *propulsione ibrido*. Although the main in-dash display keeps promising an electric range of 30 miles, the state-of-charge meter indicates otherwise. In the end, we run on five-star fuel most of the time, but there is always enough electric energy on board to mute the four mighty tailpipes when tiptoeing through sleepy villages – the incredulous expression on bystanders' faces being absolutely priceless.

The carbonfibre monocoque and the suspension, steering and brakes are closely related to Huracan and Aventador. Which explains why the Asterion feels familiar from the moment you lift the red gate that protects the starter button. Not surprisingly, the steering is somewhat handicapped by the ultra-wide 20/21 footwear, the brittle ride has provisional written all over it, and the slow throttle response suggests that e-boost is at this point only a paper tiger. Never mind. As is the case with almost all design exercises, the dynamic qualities matter less than emotional impressions such as flair, impact and that I-want-one longing. ▶



Looks like an Aventador, but check their faces when you pass in silence at 60mph



Tosca is unfinished inside. Instrument pack recalibrated to favour zero emissions data



Tosca (above) meets Asterion (right). Neither will ever make an appearance on your drive, but Lambo's future lies within both







## STEPHAN WINKELMANN CEO

'Do we believe in PHEV? Absolutely. Can we afford it? Absolutely not. The situation may change once the right technology is available at the right price. You don't have to be an expert in reading the crystal ball to assume that a hybrid edition of Urus is on the cards. But when it comes to Huracan and Aventador, Lamborghini needs a tailor-made concept that honours our chief brand values.'



Designwise, the slightly softer lines may actually be the way to go for Lamborghini, who can't possibly aspire to stamp even sharper edges and stack even more imposing wings. Sadly, it's not only on the Italians to decide which direction the company should take but also to a German committee where a certain Ferdinand Piëch used to have the say. Already well prepared for the presumably still far-off D-day is the cockpit layout which features power flow and state-of-charge displays, efficiency and charge-time readouts, and an analogue or digital rev-counter which drops to *emissioni zero* whenever the batteries take over. Integrated in the helm are three drive-mode selector buttons labelled *Zero* (electric), *Ibrido* (hybrid) and *Termico* (petrol engine).

By midday, Asterion desperately needs an adult portion of 220V, so we hook it up and switch back to Tosca. The interior looks as provisional as a work in progress invariably does. There's lots of black tape, plenty of impromptu amendments and a stage-two instrument pack which emphasises the zero-emission side of the equation. Maurizio Reggiani is back in the car with me, explaining the PHEV concept in more detail. 'We have settled for electric front-wheel drive and petrol-fed rear-wheel drive. The third electric drive unit, which incorporates a starter motor and generator, is sandwiched between the 610bhp V10 engine and the seven-speed transmission. What this configuration gives us is on-demand four-wheel drive and a hybrid mode which fuses all powerplants irrespective of the state of charge. Predictably, the biggest unknown quantities right now are the batteries and their evolution. The energy cells are still in need of improvement in terms of sustainable performance, charging time, degradation, the number of charge cycles, weight, size and cost.'



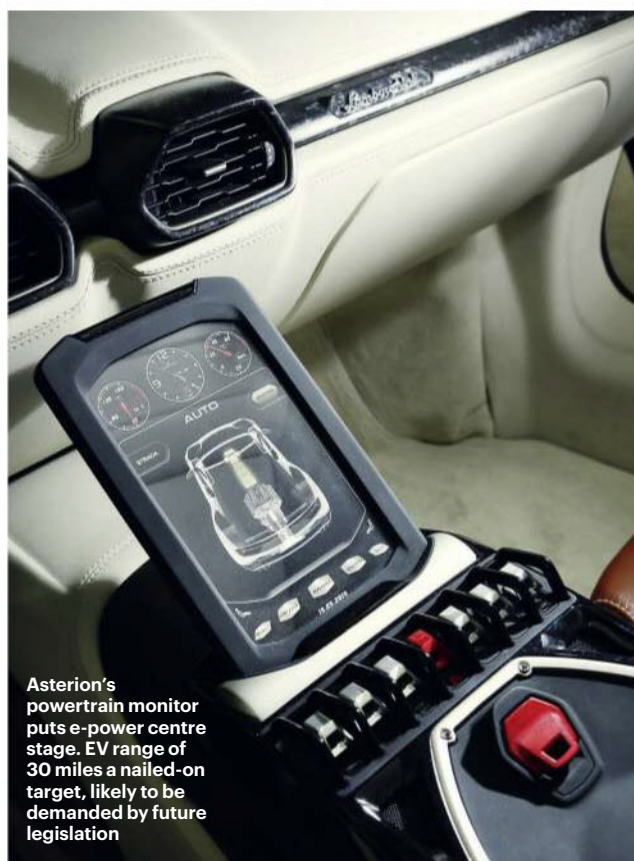
**MAURIZIO REGGIANI**  
HEAD OF R&D

'We have settled for electric front-wheel drive and petrol-fed rear-wheel drive. This configuration gives us on-demand four-wheel drive and a hybrid mode which fuses all powerplants irrespective of the state of charge.'

Predictably, the biggest unknown quantities right now are the batteries and their evolution. The whole assembly weighs over 200kg, which is much more than we saved by taking out the mechanical 4wd system.'

is Asterion, a high-performance PHEV sports car, which takes a different avenue from Audi's all-electric R8 E-tron.'

Inside Tosca, driver and passenger are separated by a slightly wider transmission tunnel which normally houses the propshaft but is stuffed to the brim with high-voltage ▶



Asterion's powertrain monitor puts e-power centre stage. EV range of 30 miles a nailed-on target, likely to be demanded by future legislation



Lamborghini's future face-to-face with Lamborghini's present: the rip-snorting V12-powered Aventador Super Veloce





Innovative powertrain aside, Asterion is a new kind of Lambo by virtue of its upright design, higher seating position and GT feel



'The whole assembly weighs over 200kg – more than we saved by taking out the 4wd system'







GT pretensions very clear in Asterion's ivory leather/sensible chairs combo. Big rev counter drops to zero under EV power – weird at 60mph!

Hefty 220kW lithium-ion battery pack located in central tunnel is charged by third motor located between rear engine and 7-speed dual-clutch gearbox



...r there's  
...mbo – a  
...e 602bhp  
...ving the rear  
...ls; at the front  
...Lambo – electric  
front-wheel drive.  
Total output 902bhp.

Front axle features two electric motors, each producing around 150bhp. They can drive 30 (theoretical) miles on EV power, at speeds of around 60mph





battery pouches. On both ends, orange power electronics connect to the propulsion units. Although this pragmatic layout helps to lower the centre of gravity and improve the weight distribution, it is impossible to ignore the extra load of calories. Having said that, the in-gear acceleration of our



**FILIPPO PERINI**  
CHIEF DESIGNER

'The Asterion points in a direction which is new for us. It is less about acceleration and top speed and more about environment-friendliness. Although the trademark cues are still easy to spot, the architecture has been heavily modified. Parked next to the extrovertly butch Aventador, the Asterion looks very clean and almost subtle. But I find its stance and presence also very exciting. It is kind of a hyper cruiser, don't you think?'

*prototipo* is simply sensational. There are no firm numbers available, but when you floor the accelerator (and the ensuing throttle lag is done with), the four potent protagonists perform an explosive simultaneous orgasm that calls for ESC assistance in first, second and third gear.

The soundtrack which underlies this neck-muscle-challenging forward thrust mixes opera buffa elements with fast techno beats. As it races up the rev ladder, the normally-aspirated 5.2-litre V10 is joined by the buzz from the front wheels which struggle to absorb all that instant torque. Even though, again, we don't have specific data, one would assume that aggregate e-power provides up to 295lb ft of extra oopmh which would lift the total twist action into 750lb ft territory.

The Asterion is not only a design concept, it is also a technology demonstrator. The target figures are a clear

indication of the direction this project is going to take. One cornerstone aim is a zero-emission driving range of 30 miles, which Lamborghini believes will soon be mandatory in markets such as China and the US. Mission number two is to curb the damage done by CO<sub>2</sub> which the Asterion accomplishes with a remarkable 98g/km rating. The resulting average fuel consumption of 67.2mpg, however, sounds as unrealistic as it likely is. The definitive PHEV installation would have to be sufficiently modular to comply with the current and future sports car DNA. Sounds logical – unless you work at Audi, where scepticism rules. Having just signed off the Urus SUV, the German parent company is reportedly reluctant to pour money into a new project saddled with uncertain timing and financial risks. Comments a board member from Ingolstadt: 'After 2018, when the Urus starts to bring fresh cash to the table, we can talk about anything they like...'

I finish my day with a blast back to the airport in the Aventador SV. It's a barely run-in car on *prova* plates, and it is raining cats and dogs again, the towering semitrailers and ubiquitous candy-coloured Cinquecentos showing equally little mercy. This is Lambo driving the way it was when test-driving legend Valentino Balboni bribed his guardian angels, when radar-trap portraits were deleted with 100,000 lira in cash, when full throttle became a habit-forming sub-

**'We are talking about the next-generation sports cars here, not about next year or the year after'**



Asterion, Aventador, Tosca... a tale of three Lamborghinis. And the future's gaining fast

stitute for zero three-quarter visibility. Devoid of assistance systems bar two pedals and one steering-wheel, the latest Aventador is the ultimate antidote to autonomous driving. Although it deserves a race track to stretch its legs, an empty section of autostrada or a wet roundabout will do just fine. Electrification may be mandatory to save the breed, but whenever the hole in the ozone layer turns a blind eye to the world below, a free-breathing, free-revving big-bore V12 still ticks all the emotional boxes.

'We must take things one step at a time,' states CEO Stephan Winkelmann. 'Lamborghini can at best be a fast follower. We are a small company and we lack the funds to set investment-intensive trends. This is what the group must take care of. Do we believe in PHEV? Absolutely. Can we afford it? Absolutely not. The situation may change once the right technology is available at the right price. We are talking about the next-generation sports cars here, not about next year or the year after. When it comes to Huracan and Aventador, Lamborghini needs a tailor-made concept that honours our chief brand values.'

What Winkelmann does not say is that these values rank performance and excitement before saving the planet. While the boss also refuses to talk about investments, a source at Audi tells us that, in view of the expected tiny volumes, parts costs alone would exceed £80,000 per vehicle. Add to this the development expenditure, and you quickly arrive at a retail price of €1m – bang in LaFerrari/McLaren P1/Porsche 918 territory.

It took Giacomo Puccini 11 years from the first libretto to the completion of *Tosca*, which premiered in the year 1900. One would hope that *signori Reggiani e Winkelmann* are going to sign off their first PHEV sports car before 2020 with a start of production to follow in 2022 at the earliest. In 2015, only clairvoyants can predict the exact nature of the engineering concept that will eventually get the nod. After all, we don't know which architecture Lamborghini is going to use beyond Huracan/Aventador, and we don't know which engines are fit to pass future CO<sub>2</sub> obstacles. A 902bhp V10 hybrid may be overkill, a hybrid V6 may be rejected by the customer base, irrespective of possible power and torque advantages. Reggiani sums it up: 'In view of the ever-changing legislation and the unpredictable hardware situation, we must do what Italians don't do very well: be patient.' With a broad smile he adds: 'But of course it does help to prepare for all eventualities.'



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NEW vs USED

## New Toyota GT86 vs used BMW E92 M3

You can pick up an M3 for less than the price of a GT86, but we don't recommend it. So, this is the £25k dilemma for keen drivers: ageing BMW icon or box-fresh Toyota sports car?

Words Ben Barry | Photography Alex Tapley

**S**TARTING FROM £23k, the Toyota GT86 serves up rear-drive sports car thrills for hot-hatch money. But for that same cash you can bag a 2007-2013 BMW M3, a performance icon with double the number of cylinders and twice the horsepower.

Madness? Well, insurance, fuel, tax, servicing, consumables... all will naturally be far more expensive for the M3, but then the Munich missile won't depreciate like a brand-new Toyota. Leggy early M3s are yours from £16k, but we'd advise spending GT86 money on a sub-50,000-miler from an independent dealer with a BMW warranty to isolate yourself from the pitfalls as far as possible.

There's much to recommend the Toyota, though. It might be built to a price inside, but it also feels like a proper driver-centric sports car. The subterranean driving position seems more Oxbridge boat race than traffic-light grand prix, the small, upright steering wheel frames a dominant rev counter calibrated





## BMW vs Toyota: the numbers

### BMW M3 (E92)

- > **Price** From £16,000
- > **Engine** 3999cc 32v V8, 414bhp @ 8300rpm, 295lb ft @ 3900rpm
- > **Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive
- > **Performance** 4.6sec 0-62mph, 155mph, 23.7mpg, 285g/km
- > **Suspension** MacPherson strut front, multi-link rear
- > **Weight/made from** 1675kg/steel
- > **Length/width/height** 4615/1804/1424mm
- > **On sale** 2007-2013

### TOYOTA GT86

- > **Price** £25,000
- > **Engine** 1998cc 16v 4-cyl, 200bhp @ 7000rpm, 151lb ft @ 6400rpm
- > **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
- > **Performance** 7.6sec 0-62mph, 140mph, 36.2mpg, 180g/km CO2
- > **Suspension** MacPherson strut front, multi-link rear
- > **Weight/made from** 1275kg/steel
- > **Length/width/height** 4240/1775/1285mm
- > **On sale** Now



to 7000rpm, and there's a stubby gearlever perfectly placed just a few inches from your left hand.

Drive it hard down a favourite road and you'll instantly notice how tight and responsive the GT86 feels. The steering is slop-free and feelsome, the nose jinks left and right with very little body roll and the throttle fizzes with feelgood response.

There's little in the way of flat-four charisma from the Subaru Boxer under the low-slung snout, but it does take on an engaging growl when you wring its neck, and that's just the way to drive this thing. With 200bhp and 151lb ft, it's impossible to surprise the rear (Prius-shared) tyres, instead you spend the entire time driving flat-out and trying to provoke them, throwing the GT86 at corners as hard as you dare and keeping the pedal mashed to the carpet. Finally eke out a slide and – ironically for something pitched as a beginner's drift car – you'll be going so hard that the police helicopter will already be flagging.

Want more? Cambridgeshire-based tuners Fensport claim 25bhp for a remap and 2.5-inch exhaust system for £1440, while turbo conversions span £5160 to £8400 for 260bhp to 440bhp.

You'd be greedy to want more from the M3. It makes 414bhp and 295lb ft, and stands as the high point of the bloodline, before M Division took away two cylinders and replaced them with turbos and, well, spoiled it a bit. The V8 combines some old-school muscle-car character with a rabid techno twist. It sounds spine-tinglingly fabulous as soon as you press the starter button, but the way it snarls and screams as you try to find space to hit the 8250rpm rev limiter is just sensational.

Traction is actually very good for something so potent, simply because the torque is higher up the rev range, so you still have to push the M3 hard to find its limits. Do that and you have to be on your game to a far greater degree than the GT86 – there's enough oomph to become an accidental YouTube sensation, but it's a very benign car to throw about so long as ▶



One a German legend, the other a Japanese upstart. Both £25k, both epic drives, one pricey to run, one likely to depreciate. Tricky, eh?





BMW cabins are even better in a used car because a) they never break and b) they're timeless. Good as new then



Toyota's head of expensive materials wasn't called upon, but the red-stitching department was on double shifts



GT86's stubby manual stick (top) feels just right, but M3's dual-clutch is faster and (sorry, purists) better

you understand the basics.

Heroes will want the manual, and we see the appeal, even if the shift is arthritic. Most cars are equipped with the dual-clutch gearbox, with its super-fast shifts in manual mode, and extra-slick auto. Good enough to convert three-pedal cavemen, we'd say.

Drive the M3 back-to-back with the Toyota and it's surprising how much more incisive the GT86 feels – the M3's steering is more detached, the front end less responsive – but there's no doubt the M car is the bigger buzz, and the more rounded choice with its larger rear seats and spacious boot.

If you take the plunge and get the M3, just remember this £25k used buy still has a £55k car's running costs, while a GT86 is, well, a new Toyota. Read on to see if it stacks up for you...

## > SERVICING AND RUNNING COSTS

The M3 is on a variable servicing schedule, but under typical use you'll need to book it in every 14-15,000 miles. Munich Legends quotes £300 for a basic service, which includes oil service, pollen filter change and labour. For every other service, you'll need spark plugs, air filter, plus gearbox and diff oil, upping the price to £500. Brake fluid needs to be refreshed every two years at a cost of £55, while a full vehicle inspection is also part of the maintenance schedule every two years, for £60.



Heated seats were popular M3 options (£260 at the time). Rear seats can be used for humans, unlike GT86's Minions-only chairs



Toyota's rear lamp cluster sometimes prone to condensation build-up

Toyota offers three levels of fixed-price GT86 servicing through its dealer network, based on 10,000 miles or annual visits. An intermediate service costs £170 (oil and filter change, plus basic vehicle inspection); a full service increases the price to £299 (inter, plus more detailed inspection). Meanwhile, full+ is £579, (full, plus spark plugs, air filter and comprehensive inspection). If you're buying a GT86 secondhand, check full+ isn't looming. The schedule works like this: 10k miles (inter), 20k (full), 30k (inter), 40k (full), 50k (inter), 60k (full+), 70k (inter), 80k (full+), 90k (inter), 100k (full).

Black Circles quotes £99 for a GT86 tyre, £228 for an M3 rear – and remember, the lighter, less powerful GT86 will be lighter on its tyres...

Insurance costs, surprisingly, aren't a million miles apart. For a typical and relatively sensible 40-year-old male with a clean licence, Adrian Flux quotes £293 with a £600 excess for the Toyota, but £350 with a £500 excess for the BMW.

## > RELIABILITY

M3 throttle bodies can fail, putting the car into limp-home mode. 'It depends how they've been driven,' says Dan Norris of Munich Legends. 'Some 50,000-mile cars have already had them done, others are getting to 70,000 miles and need them for the first time. You've got two banks of cylinders, and if one side goes, really you should replace the other at the same time; it's around £1000 a side including VAT and labour.'

The M differential can get noisy. The first step is diff additive, which costs around £100 and will hopefully quieten things down in less than 1000 miles. If not, you'll need a replacement diff, at a total of £2500 all in – Munich Legends estimates that hundreds have been replaced under warranty.

Engine problems typically stem from poor maintenance or bodged mods. Munich Legends' experts have seen piston-bore scoring caused by old spark plugs breaking up and partially entering the cylinder, while rare engine failures have been limited to cars de-restricted to run higher revs which, with an 8250rpm limit as standard, is a bit greedy.

The M3 is not immune to squeaks and rattles. The front



wings can work slightly loose, causing an audible rattle at around 80mph; there are no reports of the front bodywork actually detaching. Interior trim can also squeak, with Munich Legends removing dashboards and inserting slivers of foam between plastic trim to quieten things down.

The GT86? Well, it's a new Toyota, and even the oldest cars are still well within the five-year warranty. However, owner Jeff Heath reports that oil weeping from the engine block is common, as is condensation in the rear lights.

#### > KEY OPTIONS

There was a predictably vast options list for the M3. A very nice spec would include 19-inch alloys (£1265 at the time, and every car has them), EDC adaptive dampers (£1295, and key to the M3's rounded appeal), dual-clutch gearbox (£2590), Comfort Access (£430 for keyless start and entry), folding mirrors (£255), centre armrest (£65), heated seats (£260), carbon-structure trim inserts (£335), adaptive headlights (£245), Bluetooth (£535), DAB (£280) and the 10- (£390) or 13-speaker (£820) hi-fi upgrade.

GT86 options are pretty minimal. The new Primo edition – presumably a response to disappointing sales – lops the normal £25k price down to £23k, thanks to a pared-back spec. Options for spending more are limited to the £995 auto gearbox (don't), everything other than red paint costs £495-£650, there are £120 carbon mirror caps, JBL sounds for £1100, £750 navigation and £295 parking sensors.

#### > VERDICT

There's no doubt that the M3 is a heck of a car for £25k. You can get a very good example for that cash, and the BMW's prestige, luxurious interior, practicality and – above all – performance put it well out of the GT86's league. But it's also a car with some debilitating running costs – cave in to its V8 charms and inherent driftability and you'll be chewing through £500 of rear tyres and averaging mid-teens mpg in no time at all.



#### MY BMW E90 M3

DAN NORRIS (MD, MUNICH LEGENDS)

'I bought my E90 M3 saloon with 18,000 miles, and it's now got 60,000 on the clock. It's been fantastic – these cars are getting to the age where you should be able to reel off endless buying tips and lists of issues to look for, but it's probably the strongest M car ever built. We're always busy, so my car never gets any special treatment, no preventative maintenance, and I've had to do very little to it. If I have one bit of advice, it's buy one with under 60,000 miles and a proper service history, and get a BMW warranty on it – it's a well kept secret that's well worth the peace of mind.'



#### MY TOYOTA GT86

STEVE LOMAX

'The GT86 delivers most of what I look for in a car, but usually struggle to find: rear-drive, perfect driving position, rear seats, affordability, instant responsiveness, head-turning looks. Ignore the people who dismiss it based on its 0-60 time – the top-end punch and great chassis make carrying speed through corners far more rewarding, and I'm still averaging 28mpg. The aptly named Touch-and-Go sat-nav is out-of-date and full of bugs. Toyota is replacing it with a new unit rather than faffing with upgrades. There's also a slight smell of burning oil that I'm getting looked at, but that's the great thing about the five-year warranty.'

The Toyota is actually the more agile machine, and because its lightness and lack of power kickstarts a virtuous less-is-more circle, you can drive it hard and still get plenty of life out of its tyres and brakes while staying firmly in the mid-20s mpg. It won't breakdown, but if it does, you've got that five-year warranty.

The GT86 is the more rational choice and it offers a fantastic driving experience, but ultimately it has to be the M3, provided you've got a big pot of cash to run it.

@IamBenBarry

Thanks to: Munich Legends ([munichlegends.co.uk](http://munichlegends.co.uk)), the GT86 Owners Club ([GT86ownersclub.co.uk](http://GT86ownersclub.co.uk)) and the IM Tuned Facebook page ([www.im-tuned.uk](http://www.im-tuned.uk))



And here's Ben Barry hurrying home, no doubt calculating how many organs he'll need to sell to pay his tyre bill





PERSONAL DEALER

# Finding a perfect Aston



**Mike Beake** of independent Aston Martin specialist Bamford Rose ([www.bamfordrose.com](http://www.bamfordrose.com)) knows all there is to know about Lionel Martin and Robert Bamford's finest. Here are his three favourites. Interview by **Ben Whitworth**

£18-£40k, 1999-2004

## DB7 V12 Vantage

5835cc, V12, 420bhp, 4.9sec 0-60mph, 186mph

### > Is this a good idea?

'Well, just look at it – Ian Callum's elegantly understated lines mean the DB7 looks stunning 15 years on. Yes, its underpinnings originate from the Jaguar XJS so in the bends and on the brakes its dynamics are a little last century. You don't buy one of these to hammer A-roads – instead just sit back and enjoy one of the most elegant rides on the road.'

### > How much?

'It's all about condition, age and mileage. There are examples in need of much TLC which struggle to sell for £15k-£18k, but a pristine low-mileage example is now seen by some as an appreciating asset, fetching upwards of £35k.'

### > What's going to break?

'Most chassis bushes and arms often need replacing. Rear differentials are prone to leaking and whining. Some underside corrosion correction and prevention is needed on most cars.'

### > Crippling running costs?

'It depends on its condition – buy the best example you can afford. Budget £1k-£3k a year for servicing, repairs, tyres and brakes. Remember, owning and running an Aston is a decision of the heart and not of the head.'

£25-£45k, 2004-2008

## V8 Vantage

4300cc V8, 380bhp, 4.7sec 0-60mph, 175mph

### > Is this a good idea?

'Yes, yes, yes. Whilst it has a few rivals which are faster and handle better, the Vantage is a *bone fide* Aston. It looks fantastic, sounds great and is pretty much bulletproof. It takes no more resolve than a premium Audi, Mercedes or BMW to keep it on the road. It's a hugely rewarding car to drive and will gobble up the miles.'

### > How much?

'Examples at £25k tend to be either high-milers or colour combinations which struggle to sell, such as green paint with tan interior. These cars make a good prospect but only if tyres, brakes and service history are up to scratch. Consider vinyl wrapping over costly resprays. The limited edition N400 – celebrating the class win at the 2006 Nürburgring 24 Hours got 400bhp and better dynamics – is one to seek out.'

### > What's going to break?

'Nothing any other performance car wouldn't consume on a like-for-like mileage.'

### > Crippling running costs?

'Nope. Budget servicing between £650 and £850 a year, and the same again for tyres and brakes.'

£75-£200k, 2004-2007

## Vanquish S

5935cc V12, 520bhp, 4.5sec 0-60mph, 200mph

### > Is this a good idea?

'Hell yeah, but only if you can afford it. At launch in 2004 the 200mph Vanquish was the fastest Aston ever. That searing pace, combined with its brutally beautiful looks imbued it with peerless road presence. It's our favourite Aston, and the tweaks over the standard car transform the S. The only drawback is the cost of upkeep...'

### > How much?

'The market bottomed in 2011, but prices have been appreciating steadily since. An absolute A1 low-mileage car will hold on to its as-new price. For a good S expect to pay around £75k.'

### > What's going to break?

'We describe the Vanquish as a road diva – she decides how much workshop time and care she wants to keep her on the road! The item most likely to require a call-out is the paddle-shift gearbox, but there are numerous options and upgrades to redress its issues. Apart from the interior, any part of the car could go wrong at any time. Did we mention it's heart not head?'

### > Crippling running costs?

'Probably! You could be looking at up to £7k a year, so a professional pre-purchase inspection is vital.'





NOW IN REACH

# Gallardo: Audi's first Lamborghini

German tech, Italian style, sensible pricetag!

**LOOK, OUR FEET** are firmly on the ground here. We know that £60k is a lot of money to pour into a car. But then the Lamborghini Gallardo is an authentic Italian supercar – the first Lambo to be produced under Audi's stewardship. Taut, muscular and honed, it proved to be the perfectly wedgy combination of Italian flamboyance and German proficiency. Borrowing the four-wheel-drive layout of the bigger Murcielago, the all-aluminium Gallardo was powered by a new mid-mounted 5.0-litre V10 that swung with a 493bhp uppercut for vicious in-gear acceleration and a genuine 200mph top speed.

It was hooked up to a drivetrain that seemed to dig its claws into even the slipperiest of roads, accessing insane speeds. That rev-hungry powerplant was matched by Koni adaptive dampers, pause-button brakes and chunkily direct steering. A solidly wrought and stylish cabin topped off the package.

Yes, a Ferrari may have the last word in steering feedback and chassis polish, but show me a £60k Ferrari and I'll show you a remortgage application and cold night sweats. So, a well-engineered thoroughbred supercar that will have you laughing like a maniac every time you hit 8000rpm. Still think £60k sounds a lot?

## One we found

**2004**, 23,000 miles, **FSH**, Nero Serapis black, **£66,000**



Gallardo: a supercar with two USPs. First it won't break down, second it won't break the bank



## MY PERSONAL ICON

# Alfa Spider



**A true-blooded Alfista, Max Banks reckons his classic Pininfarina-styled Spider embodies the spirit of Italy like no other car**

➤ **'ALFA ROMEOS RUN IN THE FAMILY BLOOD.** My father started Alfaholics, where we engineer Alfas for track and road, and my brother and I have carried on the family business. We live and breathe these cars. Alfas are beautifully understated, they're wonderfully proportioned and they drive as well as they look. There's something romantic about them that's difficult to define. I own an unrestored 1978 2000 Spider Veloce – the last year of rhd production – with just 30k on the clock. I've had it for four years, and it dishes up an incredibly tactile and rewarding driving experience.'

➤ **'ITS TWIN-CAM 2.0-LITRE ENGINE** develops 125bhp, which in a 970kg convertible feels spot-on. And that performance is mechanically matched by the chassis, steering, suspension and brakes. It's a perfectly balanced package, where all the elements work together to create a superb driving experience, rather than one dynamic element dominating. And don't believe all the guff about Alfas – they're as reliable as anything else of a comparable age.'

➤ **'MY DAILY DRIVE IS A BMW M5 (F10)** which fulfills the parental taxi duties, but I much prefer the Spider. It's a joy to drive. It feels poised and eager. The robust engine is revvy, responsive and sounds superb, and the steering is beautifully feelsome. I only take it out on dry weekends and it's a tonic after a tough week. Everyone should drive one to see what I'm banging on about...'



'Hello darkness, my old friend...'  
Ah, the memories

## One we found

**1976 Alfa Romeo 2000 Spider**, 38,650 miles, **always garaged**, immaculate, **£19,995**



# OUR CARS.

A month in the life of 15 key cars – starring Ginetta G40, S-class, Lambo Huracan, Mini Cooper & more

**We only go  
and win it!**

You can't run a long-term race car without actually racing it so, armed with nothing but enthusiasm, off we went to Silverstone...

**By James Taylor**





↓  
<Adopt Murray  
Walker voice>  
'And! There!  
Goes! Taylor!'

### MONTH 3 GINETTA G40 GRDC

**THIS ISN'T THE** start to the weekend I'd hoped for. Caught in the grip of a rainstorm, Silverstone is doing a passable impression of an ice rink and the G40's cockpit mimics a steaming kettle as a vision-blocking mist works its way across the screen. It's the Friday test day ahead of the second round of the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club series, and I'm fumbling around the GP circuit's 3.7 miles because the weekend's two races will feature an extra driver on the grid – me. Well, with a racing car on the fleet, not actually racing it would be missing the point, surely? Right now, though, I'm considering forging a sick note for tomorrow. When a red flag curtails our solitary test session, I've completed at most five laps, and at least one spin. Judging by today's efforts, the GRDC regulars won't have much to fear.

Regulars is a relative term here, as the GRDC is specifically for newcomers to motorsport, bundling an eight-race series at four tracks (on the British GT support bill) with a road-legal, race-ready G40 Club car like ours. It's strictly for beginners, so

for the majority of the field this will be the second race weekend they've ever done. Me too; I've done one race meeting last year, also in a Ginetta, thanks to the want2race competition (an open-to-all initiative that awards one lucky novice the chance to go racing – last year, somehow, that was me). So in theory we're on an even footing. Ginetta offers mechanical support at the races if GRDC competitors want it, but our car's being tended to directly by the want2race team, principally founder/driver Ben Hyland and set-up guru Danny Chipper. Hence the car's bright new livery since it last appeared in these pages. To add a little bit of pressure Ben's racing it this weekend too, in the separate GRDC+ championship (same cars, but experienced drivers and semi-slick tyres). I'd better not bend it then.

Mercifully, Saturday dawns dry. Sunny, even. Ben heads out for GRDC+ qualifying and returns with pole position in the bag. So I can't blame the car. Running out of excuses, I join 19 other G40s clad with novice crosses in the assembly area for GRDC qualifying. Many of them have made the journey to Silverstone on the road – all GRDC-spec G40s are road-legal, ▶

↑  
James greets the  
chequered flag  
with relief – he's  
so far ahead he  
was starting to  
think he'd taken  
a wrong turn  
somewhere

JAKOB EBBREY



after all. Some of the drivers are seasoned trackday-goers, some had never ventured onto a circuit before this year. All of them are friendly and encouraging. And then a marshal is waving us onto the circuit and we're all trying to find the fastest route around the vast Silverstone GP layout. It's a lot more fun in the dry. I've passed two cars ahead and they're growing smaller in the mirrors, which can only be a good sign. Danny hangs out the pitboard as I start my third lap. Amazingly, if I've read it right, it says P2. That's an even better sign. There's still time in the car, though. To go quickly in a G40 it needs to be moving around ever so slightly, always in the beginnings of a slide, and I can't quite find the confidence to allow it to. There's time for one more lap, and I chide myself to brake a bit later, carry a bit more speed and generally be a bit less of a wimp. Session over, we're funnelled down the pitlane and into *parc fermé* for scrutineering and story swapping. Ben and Danny look happy. So do I when I find out why. Turns out that last lap did the trick: incredibly, I'm on pole.

We've also had a light ticking off. Entry logistics mean Ben and I need different numbers on the car for our respective races, and our Blue Peter black tape efforts are judged more abstract art than legible characters. By the time I'm lining up on the

grid for the first race, the G40's wearing a mix of fonts – not stylish, but readable enough to give the scorekeepers a fighting chance. I'm starting alongside Adrian Campbell-Smith, winner of both the opening GRDC races at Rockingham. Under the advice that wheel-spin is the lesser evil to bogging down, I give it plenty of revs off the line and it works – I get to Copse first. So happy am I about this that I relax and take the sweeping Maggots and Becketts combo so leisurely that Adrian simply drives alongside me down Hangar Straight, then braves it out round the outside of the fast right-hander at Stowe to retake the lead. If I'm going to uphold our car's honour I'll have to find a way to re-pass him. The following lap he makes a small mistake through Becketts and the situation's reversed – we go side-by-side through Stowe for the second time in two laps, this time with me on the outside. Adrian very sportingly leaves me plenty of room and I emerge ahead – I'm leading a race on a Grand Prix circuit in our long-term.

It's quite a feeling. When I manage to stop watching the mirrors I begin to relax and – here's the thing – actually enjoy it. I progressively pull out a lead and, after 15 minutes and six laps (it's a long track), cross the line first. This has gone rather better than I'd expected. There's a podium ceremony with trophies, Ginetta-branded champagne ('Product de Yorkshire' it says on the label; nice touch) and, to my horror, an interview over



## What is want2race?

**OPEN TO** anyone over the age of 18 without an MSA car race licence, want2race is the UK's foremost novice racing driver competition. You qualify at one of 15 karting circuits around the UK, the most impressive (not outright fastest) drivers making it through to the next stage at Bedford in October. There you'll be assessed on track in Ginetta race cars by professional instructors, including current BTCC drivers. First prize is a fully funded season in the 2016 GRDC, including car hire, insurance, race licence test and all the fireproof clobber you'll need. Entries close in September. [www.want2race.co.uk](http://www.want2race.co.uk)



**New livery looks smashing on track. A bit noisy on the road though, much like the car itself**





the circuit tannoy (and, later, another for TV). Ben's also won the first GRDC+ race, after a tense battle with another former want2race winner, Rob Keogh, so the car's had a clean sweep of poles, wins and fastest laps today. Things can only go downhill from here.

To that end, Sunday arrives freezing cold and – gulp – very wet. GRDC cars run on the same Michelin road tyres in all weathers, rather than the expensive racing wets I rather wish were bolted on instead. The grid's decided by yesterday's race, so Adrian and I share the front row again. This time he leads into the first corner after I get over-excited, sky the revs and sit with the rear wheels spinning. His car's slipping and sliding but ours feels reassuringly planted; however Danny's set it up, it's working. There's more fun, fair dicing: I have a go at outbraking Adrian into Stowe and overshoot; he has a tank-slapper slide at the Club chicane but manages to hold it. Eventually I'm able to slip past into the fiddly Arena section and build a lead to the flag. It doesn't feel any more real the second time around. It still doesn't. For a weekend I've felt like a racing driver, stood on the very podium I daydreamed about standing on when I was at school, and got a few fleeting, tantalising glimpses of how the G40 feels when its tyres are sliding in unison. This year's want2race competition winner will do each and every round of the 2016 GRDC series. Unfortunately for yours truly, it can't be me this time (maybe it could be you, reading this now), but I've been lucky to have a taste of the fun they'll have. It's addictive, this racing thing.

@JamesTaylor\_5

## From the driving seat

⊕ Challenging on the track, involving on the road ⊖ Not actually that quick in a straight line ⊕ Usable boot ⊕ Speedbumps? No problem ⊕ Deliciously sweet-shifting gearbox ⊖ Earthquake-rivalling NVH levels



## An everyday tale of simple country folk

MONTH 2 SEAT LEON X-PERIENCE

**R**IGHT, NOW THAT I have a brown four-wheel-drive estate, car it's been pitched right into the pastoral, rural life that is the Moody family existence – which is pretty much like *The Archers*, but with better acting.

The cricket club's mower broke down and to get it to old Malcolm in the village to fix I threw it in the Leon. Then we needed to buy some chickens (because two small kids, a large stupid labrador and a large stupid husband aren't enough things for my wife to look after), so off we went to Leicestershire where we picked three up. In the boot they went too.

During half term it was decided the Moodys should go on holiday. Adhering strictly to the middle-class stereotype, we headed to North Cornwall, listening to improving radio, with the kids in their Boden summer gear.

At the end of all of this, and probably before she runs off with the lord of the manor or the cow shed burns down or the bus shelter is destroyed by vandals from Borchester, I said to my wife what a remarkable amount of space the MQB platform affords the X-Perience, happily swallowing dogs, chickens, mowers, surfboards and kids, and that in the old days nobody bought these Ford Focus-sized estate cars, but with the Leon, they might well do now.

'It's not the same size as a Focus!' she exclaimed. 'Gosh, it seems much bigger than that!'

And there another fascinating episode of *The Moodys* ends. Now, it's time for *Front Row* here on Radio 4.

**STEVE MOODY** @Sjmoody37

## From the driving seat

⊕ Extra travel gives a smooth ride ⊖ Can be raucous under heavy load ⊕ Usual beefy VW Group diesel with plenty of in-gear shove ⊖ It's no sporty machine: increased height means more body roll



⬆ And in tomorrow's episode *The Moodys* buy some equestrian bedding

## LOGBOOK

GINETTA G40 GRDC

⤵ **Engine** 1800cc 16v, 135bhp @ 5000rpm, 110lb ft @ 4500rpm (est) ⤵ **Gearbox** 5-speed manual, rear-wheel drive ⤵ **Stats** 6.0sec 0-62mph, 130mph ⤵ **Price** £35,940 ⤵ **As tested** £35,940 ⤵ **Miles this month** 215 ⤵ **Total miles** 3363 ⤵ **Our mpg** n/a ⤵ **Official mpg** n/a ⤵ **Fuel this month** n/a ⤵ **Extra costs** £0 (want2race & Ginetta covered race costs)



⬆ This little dice went on for most of the race

⬅ Our James (vast trophy, centre) shares a podium with Adrian Campbell-Smith (left) and Richard Evans

## LOGBOOK SEAT LEON X-PERIENCE

⤵ **Price** £26,370 ⤵ **As tested** £28,285 ⤵ **Miles this month** 1036 ⤵ **Total miles** 1932 ⤵ **Our mpg** 45.8 ⤵ **Official mpg** 57.6 ⤵ **Fuel this month** £122.86 ⤵ **Extra costs** £0





## We could do this all day

Our weeny Renault is pretty good, considering they forgot to connect the steering wheel to anything. By Mark Walton

### MONTH 3 RENAULT TWINGO

**I LIKE DRIVING** the Twingo. No, you can't induce oversteer (I've tried) but the rear-engine, rear-drive configuration definitely lends it a different feel to your average city hatch.

You can feel it settling on its outside-rear wheel when you throw it at a curve and get on the power.

Power! Ha! With just 69bhp on tap, overtaking is practically impossible unless it's a tractor, or you swoop by an unsuspecting car on a long straight without pausing to give a polite warning. But again, there's a pleasure to be had, maintaining momentum, and I get home from my daily commute feeling like I've thrashed it, which is satisfying. Fuel consumption is suffering from WLF (Walton Lead Foot).

The brakes are impressive. In fact they're a little over-enthusiastic when you first drive it, grabbing when you breathe on them, but eventually you discover how powerful they are when you really stand on them. I've overtaken several cars into a roundabout, only to be re-taken again as I chug away on the way out.

Ah, but then there's one thing – one huge and terrible flaw – that ultimately ruins the cheeky little Twingo. And that's the steering. I'm not even talking about the horrible variable rack fitted to the

turbo version – ours is the normally aspirated car, remember, with the linear steering. But... it's electric, it has zero feel, and it is abominably slow. Four turns lock-to-lock! Driving round a multi-storey your arms are flailing about like you're trying to swat a wasp. It's like the steering wheel on one of those sit-on kiddie rides at the supermarket – a pink elephant on a rocker with flashing lights and a steering wheel that's not connected to anything.

The handling, the brakes, all the pleasure of revving that little triple, all are ruined by this soulless, artificial, anaesthetised steering. It feels like it's stuck in 'city' mode, designed to help grannies park; sadly there is no sharper, pointier setting.

So instead I have to content myself with the Twingo's party trick: crank those front wheels all the way round and you can perform U-turns so tight the rear wheels are practically stationary, while the nose spins like a top. Sometimes, driving through town on a quiet night, I'll do a 360-degree turn between the kerbs, just because.

### From the driving seat

➕ Compact dimensions inspire confidence ➕ Rear engine and rear drive bestow it with quirky handling  
➕ Three-point turns a thing of the past ➖ Awful, numb, soulless electric steering ➖ Overtaking not easy



⬆️ **Steering set-up signed off by the people who plonk those ride-on Noddy cars outside Tesco**

### LOGBOOK RENAULT TWINGO PLAY SCE 70

➤ **Engine** 999cc 12v 3-cyl, 69bhp @ 6000rpm, 67lb ft @ 2850rpm  
➤ **Gearbox** 5-speed manual, rear-wheel drive ➤ **Stats** 14.5sec 0-62mph, 94mph, 105g/km ➤ **Price** £9,995 ➤ **As tested** £10,585 ➤ **Miles this month** 812 ➤ **Total miles** 2230 ➤ **Our mpg** 37.8  
➤ **Official mpg** 62.8 ➤ **Fuel this month** £114 ➤ **Extra costs** £0

## Top of the Golf leaderboard

### MONTH 2 VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R

**W**ITH THE 1000-mile marker broken, I've allowed myself to stretch the Golf R's legs for the first time. And, honestly, I love it. Key is the all-wheel-drive system, a massive leap over the old Haldex set-ups that added weight and brought very little to the driving experience. This system responds much faster, adding much-needed interactivity – accelerate through a corner and you can really feel the back getting out of bed and lending a hand. But, crucially, there's also some clever stability-control-based tuning going on, too: chuck the R into a bend and you can sense the front inside brakes being subtly applied, tucking the car into the corner. It's not only sharper than the old R32s, but sharper than the previous-

generation Mk6 Golf R too – drive that car hard and you could feel the front tyres heating up and starting to spin.

The 2.0-litre engine also helps the handling magic. Not long ago, Golf R32s had a heavyweight six-cylinder over the nose. Now the R gets a four. Okay, so you don't get that creamy soundtrack, but the lower weight helps agility, and synthetic sound effects give the 2.0-litre turbo an almost flat-four-like thrum, which differentiates it from the same – less powerful – unit in the GTI. I like it.

For the first time, I'm convinced that this R is better than the GTI. Before, it was a choice between a GT lux feel (R32) or hot-hatch playfulness. Now, the R's just better.

**BEN BARRY** @iamBenBarry

### LOGBOOK VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R

➤ **Price** £31,475 ➤ **As tested** £35,640 ➤ **Miles this month** 1059 ➤ **Total miles** 1943 ➤ **Our mpg** 28.02 ➤ **Official mpg** 39.8 ➤ **Fuel this month** £201.33 ➤ **Extra costs** £0

Looks like VW has finally out-GTI-ed the GTI



### From the driving seat

➕ Agile handling, fast-acting Awd ➕ Quick, precise steering  
➖ Leon 280 shares engine, but has more lowdown kick; both engines could rev higher ➕ Gearshift slick... ➖ ...but Leon's slicker ➕ Supple ride on adaptive dampers



# Summertime, and the living is... fast

Finally decent weather lets the cork out of the bottle, and our plug-in limo gets to work on its new tyres. By Georg Kacher

MONTH 6  
MERCEDES  
S500 PHEV

**SUMMER TYRES**, at last! Which means no more speed limit when there is no speed limit. And higher cornering speeds. And more cornering grip. Except when I dive deep into the sub-menu to deactivate ESP. You see, there is a business park nearby which works really well as Sunday morning playground. A 63-year-old child? You bet. Surprisingly, the economy does

not suffer that badly from full-throttle antics. All it takes is the discipline to hook up Willy the Whale before closing the garage door.



## ↑ High-tech drivetrain = 27.6mpg?

Despite the hybrid package and fancy energy flow graphics, 27.6mpg is not exactly Golf diesel territory. But it includes plenty of 130mph-plus autobahn runs. The S-class's connectivity, also

activated via this screen, isn't perfect. Activating the phone takes two steps, Apple CarPlay is sorely missed, and the stacked controller-touch pad unit in the centre console requires extra fingers.

## From the driving seat

- ✚ The on-demand silent waftability which transforms the social acceptance from marginal to exceptional - especially in the city.
- ✚ The 19in wheels. Work wonders for the ride, not the street cred
- ✚ Surprisingly fast when engine and motor combine
- ✚ Dash already looking dated



## ↑ Getting in a flap over these flaps

The two sandwich flaps which conceal the plug-in connector socket do annoy me. You see, I keep forgetting to snap them shut after unhooking the charging

cable and loading it in the boot. A little warning light would certainly help. Or better still, a self-closing door. Or, of course, a triple-figure IQ.

## LOGBOOK MERCEDES-BENZ S500 PHEV

✚ **Engine** 2996cc 24v V6 turbo petrol with plug-in hybrid electric drive, 436bhp @ 5000rpm, 354lb ft @ 1600rpm ✚ **Gearbox** 7-speed auto, rear-wheel drive ✚ **Stats** 5.2sec 0-62mph, 155mph (electronically limited), 65g/km ✚ **Price** €108,945 ✚ **As tested** €154,890 ✚ **Miles this month** 1297 ✚ **Total miles** 7499 ✚ **Our mpg** 27.6 ✚ **Official mpg** 100.9 ✚ **Fuel this month** €294.60 ✚ **Extra costs** €0



## ↑ Lie back and think of Germany

Black paint meets ivory interior. Spot-on for the target audience, too mainstream for GK. The cockpit is as superbly crafted as you'd expect, but almost Maybach-esque in appearance. And the legroom,

both front and rear, is astonishing. Makes a good first-class cabin feel like cattle class on Banana Airways. The glass sunroof is vast - it's a big opening lid complemented by an equally big fixed panel.



TOM SALT



## How we specced our NX300h

### Navigation package

Seemingly fully comp nav is standard, but our Premier-spec car has an upgraded set offering bags of extra connectivity toys via the Lexus Enform system. More later

### Panoramic sunroof

It's called a 'Moonroof', but we're obliged to point out that other planets are also available. It transforms the car inside, as it should for a grand

# And barely a curve in sight

Lexus – that arch challenger of convention – is at it again, reviving the lost art of paper folding to produce a most striking SUV. Ours for the rest of 2015. **By Greg**

**HELLO  
MONTH 1  
LEXUS NX  
300h**

**LEXUS DESIGNER NOBUYUKI** Tomatsu probably didn't believe his mum when she said learning origami would come in handy one day. But here's the proof. For surely the outrageously edgy NX could be fashioned from a single piece of A4 by a skilled paper-folder, so few actual curvy bits does it contain. To me, that's

a good thing. I love this rakish confidence – it's as if they've noticed that most modern SUVs have inched in a more chiselled direction – step up RAV4, CR-V, Yeti, Juke etc – and decided to go the whole hog. The result is so sharp it might cut itself.

We did something here we rarely do: opted for the hybrid. That's because the alternative – the 2.0-litre turbocharged NX200t – makes a bit of a hash of the pointless task of turning the NX into a sporty car. By sounding as whiny as a hybrid (when it isn't one), changing gear like a CVT (when it's an auto) and sporting a stability control system that ruins the fun like a death at a birthday party, the NX200t falls between a whole bunch of stools. So, despite being gifted a 50kg weight penalty courtesy of two electric motors and some batteries, the hybrid gets the nod.

Those two electric motors serve different purposes – the front motor gets you off the line in wallowy silence, and thereafter spends its days mucking in with brake energy recovery and battery charging duties, while the rear motor acts as a generator in regenerative braking mode until it's called upon to assist the rear axle when front grip gives out. Bear in mind that Lexus's E-Four 4wd system is really front-wheel drive until

something slippery happens. All of which leaves the 2.5-litre four-pot petrol engine to do nearly all the work and, like anyone who has to do nearly all the work, it whines quite a bit.

We'll delve further into the true driving experience over the coming months, but the underpinning reality is that this isn't a quick motor car – 9.2sec to 62mph tells its tale – and if you try to turn it into one you end up standing on the right pedal with the rev needle stuck at the limiter, wheezing your way into the fast-moving traffic while a 44-tonne Scania fills your mirrors with his DRS seemingly open.

That's a lesson already learned. Lexus talks up the so-called kickdown function, intended to drop a couple of virtual cogs on demand rather than rely on the CVT's studious progress, but amazement eludes me. It just feels as if you're being mechanically unsympathetic – driving like an arse, basically. And it doesn't seem to get you there any quicker.

Not that you feel in a particularly racy mood when driving the NX. Why would you, when seated on ridiculously chic leather chairs, surrounded by a mixture of cossety comforts and techy control surfaces, saturated by the sounds pouring out



**Lux interior all rather splendid, though opinion is split on stadium-style centre stack and hair-trigger touchpad controller**





#### Sonic Titanium paint

Adds £645 to the bill, but doesn't look very sonic to us. It's intended to give a 'metallic-like shine', thanks to super-condensed mica particles. Maybe it needs a clean

#### Powered tailgate

Everything's thrown in at this end of the spec spectrum, but they could have left this out. I could have got home from Tesco in the time it takes to shut

#### Four-wheel drive

Obvious perhaps, but a front-wheel-drive version is available, saving 70kg in weight thanks to lack of electric motor on rear-axle

MARK RICHMOND

of the 14 speakers Mark Levinson donated to the cause. Never mind kickdown, a stay-awake function might be in order.

Thank heavens then for the 'Remote Touch' touchpad controller, which sits there taunting you, daring you to attempt a simple function like changing radio stations, without accidentally calling the cops or setting a course for the post office in Guatemala City. I accept that I may get used to it, but right now the thing feels horribly misjudged. It's like trying to diffuse a bomb while driving. Even brain surgeons may fluff it.

I need to crack it though, as it holds the key to Lexus's premium navigation system, served up by a 7in screen set high on the centre stack (which is tiered like a stadium). Masses of mod-cons for us to discover in here later, but headline-grabbing goodies include a head-up display and a wireless phone-charger tray.

In this 'Premier' spec the NX is £42,995 on the road, which rather knocks holes in my simplistic belief that it's a Nissan Juke rival. The most extravagant Juke is £24k, same for the Skoda Yeti. BMW X1, maybe? Merc GLA? The Lexus feels more upmarket than all of them, especially as we've added the £1k panoramic sunroof (and £645 fancy paint) to take the total to £44,640. And, being a hybrid, it should be frugal as well as upmarket. Looking forward to finding out.

@GregFountain1

### LOGBOOK

#### LEXUS NX300h PREMIER

➤ **Engine** 2494cc 16v 4-cyl, 153bhp @ 5700rpm (195bhp with electric motor), 148lb ft @ 4200-4400rpm ➤ **Gearbox** Electric CVT, four-wheel drive ➤ **Stats** 9.2sec 0-62mph, 112mph, 121g/km CO2 ➤ **Price** £42,995 ➤ **As tested** £44,640 ➤ **Miles this month** 1780 ➤ **Total miles** 2515 ➤ **Our mpg** 40.1 ➤ **Official mpg** 54.3 ➤ **Fuel this month** £274.54 ➤ **Extra costs** £0

## OUR CARS.



## Heavy is the new light (apols to Gordon Murray)

### MONTH 6 RANGE ROVER SPORT

**LET'S BE HONEST**, I don't need an off-roader. If you have one too, chances are you don't either. I know that a tall, heavy car with unnecessary four-wheel drive offends all that is holy in vehicle dynamics and efficiency. If you're reading this magazine, you know it too. But few seem to care. Here in the UK, the Kia Sportage outsold the Ford Mondeo last year. Globally, Land Rover is growing at a furious rate: this year it will make well over 400,000 cars. Before you get too sniffy about SUVs, keep in mind the thousands of jobs and billions of pounds of income they create here each year.

So why do we love them so much? Few of Land Rover's 400,000 buyers care much about design and engineering purity, or fitness for purpose. They just know that a big, airy cabin with great views, lots of space and a greater sense of security is a nice thing to have, and the ability to bounce up the occasional kerb or down a muddy track is handy, and all the more so if you're a terrible driver and/or live in a country with even worse roads than ours.

I do care about fitness for purpose and engineering purity. I went to see Gordon Murray recently and I parked my Range Rover Sport out of sight of his office lest the high priest of lightweight be offended by the leviathan I'd arrived in. My head and my petrolhead heart both tell me that I need a diesel estate car – and we have one as our other car. But the irrational, soft, comfort-seeking human being in me just loves the Range Rover. Honestly, you should feel sorry for me having to drive this car every day. It's a daily internal struggle: one which my rational side is rapidly losing.

If you remain an SUV-hater, you probably haven't lived with one this good: I appreciate that not all are. If you have and you say you still can't see the appeal, I'm not sure I believe you. Everyone is giving in: me, Mondeo Man and the board of Rolls-Royce. Maybe Gordon Murray will do an iStream SUV next. Resistance is futile.

**BEN OLIVER** @thebenoliver

### From the driving seat

➤ **Rivals BMW X5 for on-road performance, especially in Dynamic mode**  
➤ **3.0-litre V6 turbodiesel is entry engine but adequate given aluminium construction**  
➤ **Off-pace infotainment**  
➤ **Still near-unstoppable off-road**

➤ **SUVs? Even a two year-old can see the appeal**



### LOGBOOK RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0 SDV6 HSE DYNAMIC

➤ **Price** £66,250 ➤ **As tested** £75,607 ➤ **Miles this month** 892 ➤ **Total** 6213 ➤ **Our mpg** 28.1 ➤ **Official mpg** 37.7 ➤ **Fuel this month** £182.71 ➤ **Extra costs** £0



Ben ♥ Caterham.  
No seriously – we  
had to prise the  
keys off him



## COUNT THE COST

**Cost new** £22,355  
(including £4360 of options)  
**Dealer sale price** £17,995  
**Private sale price** £15,500  
**Part-exchange price** £14,900  
**Cost per mile** 12.7p  
**Cost per mile including  
depreciation** £0.73

# The best year of our lives

If you haven't driven a Caterham Seven, you haven't driven. Our 11,000-mile journey together is over, but we will never forget it. **By Ben Whitworth**

**GOODBYE  
MONTH 13  
CATERHAM  
SEVEN 160**

**I RACKED UP** 11,578 miles in my long-term Caterham over the last 13 months – and my god, every single one of them was an absolute pleasure. More than a few eyebrows were raised among friends and family when I told them what was landing on the driveway and for how long. To be honest, I had no idea what it would be like using a Seven as everyday wheels. Most, if not all owners use theirs as trackday and weekend weapons, wheeling them out when the roads are dry and the sky is blue. I would be driving it every day, no matter where I had to go or what the weather.

Such an uncompromising car calls for a lot of compromises from the driver. I had no problem slithering down into the surprisingly-spacious-once-you-are-in cabin wearing earplugs, dinky suede driving booties, a hat of sorts and a warm jacket for pretty much every journey. It seemed like a very small price to pay for the generous serving of driving pleasure that the 160 served up with every twist of its key.

For anyone brought up on driving traditional cars – you know, those with doors, and roofs and radios and insulation and electric everything – the pared-back purity of the Caterham driving experience is difficult to describe. This is a car that never feels anything but electrifyingly vibrant, as if it were hardwired into your cortex.

With just 80bhp on tap, the lightweight 490kg 160 sits at the bottom of the Seven performance ladder. By Seven standards it's tardy, by traditional car standards it's plenty quick, but the trick the 160 pulls is that it *feels* ridiculously rapid. The steering wheel is a live thing in your hands, the engine wails and howls with a ferocity that belies its capacity and output, the gearlever snicks through its gate with a beautifully mechanical precision, and the biddable chassis feels



↑  
**That's the younger Whitworths' 18th birthday presents sorted. Hope the ignition barrel will be fixed by then**

## LOGBOOK CATERHAM SEVEN 160

➤ **Engine** 660cc 12v triple, 80bhp @ 7000rpm, 79lb ft @ 3400rpm ➤ **Gearbox** 5-speed manual, rear-wheel drive ➤ **Stats** 6.5sec 0-62mph, 100mph, 114g/km ➤ **Price** £17,995 ➤ **As tested** £22,355 ➤ **Miles this month** 359 ➤ **Total miles** 11,578 ➤ **Our mpg overall** 44.1 ➤ **Official mpg** 57.6 ➤ **Fuel cost overall** £1350.73 ➤ **Extra costs overall** £160 (service)

pin-sharp. Clocking on at 70mph is a sensory overload most supercars couldn't match at twice that speed.

What also shone through on even the coldest of January days was its indefatigable sparkiness. It always felt full of brio and effervescence, always keen to tackle any road as fast and as sideways as you dared, and then go back again and tackle it again. Despite being redlined in pretty much every gear every day, that little blown 660cc triple was surprisingly light on fuel, returning an impressive overall average of 44.1mpg for a realistic 350-mile range. A single £160 service aside, there were no other costs incurred.

We had a few gremlins over the year. The gearbox linkage needed minor fettling, the ignition barrel needed replacing, and a weeping brake line saw it out of action for a few days. Impressive, for what is ostensibly a low-volume hand-built car. All repairs were carried out under warranty.

If I had to make a wish list of improvements it would be short. No, not more power – the grunt-to-grip balance is spot on – but I'd like to have more safety equipment than a seatbelt and a rollover bar. Sevens are small, but meeting Japanese *kei* standards means the 160 is even smaller. In traffic, Qashqais are terrifyingly enormous, Range Rovers block out the

sun, and artics feel like land-bound aircraft carriers. Anti-lock brakes, traction control and a couple of airbags would be most welcome but their development and production would probably bankrupt Caterham three times over. Pity.

During the 160's last month in my keep I made the foolish error of finding out how much it would cost to buy it through a Caterham financial package. The thought of me handing over its keys was just too depressing to think about. Owning it was just out of reach, even wearing my most creative accounting hat, and knowing how steadfastly Caterhams hang on to their values. But one day...

So after 13 months the 160 has gone. Black armbands all round. I was genuinely upset when I handed it back. It filled me with anticipation every time I set off, and with regret every time I turned off the engine. It made every journey an event and it made me a better driver. It's been the best motoring year of my life.

@benwhitworth



# Whatever floats your boat

MONTH 5 CITROEN C4 CACTUS

**C**AST ASIDE aspirations of long-haul ergonomic contentment and cutting-edge dynamics, and think more of the Cactus as a solid mahogany Riva Aquarama from the thigh-scorching turquoise leatherette bench seat of which you are helming your way over a glittering chuckle of light, mid-summer Mediterranean chop...

Though engine notes decidedly do not, respective ride qualities actually have much in common; fundamentally smooth with an ever-present, non-intrusive veneer of jostle, nudge and surface bicker. Lob into the equation the fact that the steering does what's asked of it with appropriately little effort and adequate accuracy, and the Cactus acquits itself perfectly well on the average, family-encumbered run.

The gearlever, however, boasts sufficient throw and travel to offer a left-arm workout

on a par with the steering oar of a Greek trireme. Mercifully, individual gears are invariably where you left them, and the missus and I are now fully acclimatised to locating them without baulk, bitch or bluster.

There's no point pushing the whole ensemble too hard. Though MacPherson-strut front and torsion-beam rear suspension offers respectable body control and an unexpectedly flat cornering stance when oozing along A-roads, attempts to hustle down Rolling English Drunkard-sponsored byways merely unsettle the composure, upset a powerplant which bursts into tears when asked for ramming speed, and herald the onset of oversteer.

Though the resolutely unsold missus would kick me for saying this, then; treat it like a boat offering gently somnambulant float, and the Cactus actually exudes a certain, well, charm.

**ANTHONY FFRENCH-CONSTANT**

## LOGBOOK C4 CACTUS

➤ Price £17,990 ➤ As tested £19,330 ➤ Miles this month 452 ➤ Total miles 4116 ➤ Our mpg 53.3 ➤ Official mpg 83.1 ➤ Fuel this month £47.36 ➤ Extra costs £0



Riding along on the crest of a wave, yesterday

## From the driving seat

- Fundamentally comfortable ride quality with a whiff of fidget
- Quickly loses composure when hustled beyond the cruise
- Light, accurate steering gives no cause for complaint
- Old-fashioned, long-throw, somewhat baggy gear change

## From the driving seat

- Huge V10 performance isn't wearing thin any time soon
- Dynamic steering makes for relaxing motorway commute
- Hard seats and road noise wearing on 3-hour+ journeys
- Adaptive suspension balances comfort with control
- Wish it offered the option to tailor driving modes



# Nugget of purest green

Officially we were comparing two steering systems. Unofficially? Testing people's reactions. By CJ Hubbard

## MONTH 2 LAMBO HURACAN

**WE GET** a lot of emails at work. Some are useful, some are exciting, and some contain unsolicited press releases, usually concerning surveys on behalf of giveourservicepublicity.com. Probably half a dozen of these a year will be about what the colour of your car says about you. Drive a red Daewoo Matiz? You must be very angry (and who could blame you?). Drive a silver Nissan Qashqai? You need to redress your lack of imagination before it deserts you altogether. A blue VW Jetta? You're an international assassin slipping under the radar.

Drive a green Lamborghini Huracan? You must be more popular than God. Wait. Green?

Er, yes. For a brief few days I was CJ 'two Lambos' Hubbard, as a 'Verde Mantis' Huracan came to keep the white wedge compa-

ny. There was a legitimate reason: the green car has the standard rather than the dynamic steering. Which is legitimate, because whenever someone wearing super-car-branded clothing approaches me to ask about the Huracan (this does actually happen), the first question they ask is 'has it got the funny steering?'

Still, the steering isn't the most interesting thing about the green car. The most interesting thing is what a difference the colour makes to the number of people that notice you. The white, it turns out, genuinely is subtle by Lambo standards whereas Verde Mantis could, in all likelihood, stop a riot. I'm not sure how many instances of whiplash it actually caused, but I felt lucky to avoid causing any inadvertent hospitalisation. Choose wisely – and I'm not talking about the steering, since both systems have merits and neither ruins the car.

📍@ir\_427

↑ You wait ages for a Lamborghini Huracan to come along...

## LOGBOOK LAMBORGHINI HURACAN LP610-4

➤ Engine 5204cc dual-injection V10, 602bhp @ 8250rpm, 413lb ft @ 6500rpm  
➤ Gearbox 7-speed dual-clutch, all-wheel drive ➤ Stats 3.2sec 0-62mph, 202mph, 290g/km ➤ Price £186,760 ➤ As tested £224,836 ➤ Miles this month 1138 ➤ Total miles 37,229 ➤ Our mpg 16.6 ➤ Official mpg 22.6 ➤ Fuel this month £280.37 ➤ Extra costs £0





## From the driving seat

➕ Teeny little triple is loosening up nicely; feels more powerful ➕ Mpg is on the up too  
 ➖ Ride no better though. It almost can't cope with the rutted roads near my other half's family home in Lincolnshire  
 ➖ Voice recognition a bit rubbish

If they caught you talking to an original Mini they'd think you were mad. Nothing's changed



RICHARD PARDON

# My Mini doesn't understand me

Thanks to the Mini we can now confirm that voice recognition definitely works. Except for the recognition bit. **By Ben Pulman**

MONTH 8  
MINI  
COOPER  
5DR

**MY BLESSED** grandparents are getting a little deaf in their old age, but the occasional shouted conversation – subsequently repeated once or twice – is nothing like as frustrating or tedious as 'talking' to the Mini's voice

recognition system.

I love almost everything about iDrive – or whatever Mini re-brands it as – and read the day BMW follows fashion and replaces the functional rotary controller with a damn touchscreen. Yet just occasionally I don't have enough hands to steer, indicate, change gear and twiddle with that little knob down by my knees, and thus need to talk to my car instead. Problem is, it interprets orders about as well as Ronnie Corbett's hardware store shopkeeper.

Press a button on the steering wheel and you're offered a few pre-set inputs to get going. I proclaim 'Destination Input' in a booming voice, there's no problem there, and we move onto the next step.

'Please say the house number, followed by the street and the place,' instructs my Mini.

I reply 'Navigate to Gatwick Airport South Terminal', knowing full well where Gatwick is, but wanting a route out of south London and the active traffic alerts to go with it.

'Processing your input,' announces the lady in the dashboard. Then she checks if she's heard me right: 'Did you mean Cheltenham, The Gorse, o?'

I did not, and chastise her politely. She doesn't recognise my reply and goes quiet, leaving me looking at a sat-nav screen displaying our possible destination in Cheltenham, along with a host of other locations around the UK that don't sound like Gatwick and definitely aren't Gatwick. Repeating 'No' over and over eventually takes us back to the previous screen and we try again.

'Please say the house number, followed by the street and the place.'

I do so.

'Did you mean South Cerney, The Limes, 11?'

I didn't, and tell her so – with a firm 'No'.

'Please say the house number, followed by the street and the place.'

I shorten our destination to 'London Gatwick'. This time there's no confusion. Our destination is selected. We're ready to go... to Gelligaer. Which isn't Gatwick, but is somewhere between Cardiff and the Brecon Beacons.

I shout a little, then we reconcile our differences and I try 'Gatwick'.

Up pops one of those multiple-choice menus again, this time listing Rake, Wick, Crayke, Warwick, Lowick, Lairg and Winwick, but not Gatwick.

'No!' I then pronounce: 'Gat-wick'.

She bings in recognition. But nothing actually happens. We try again. 'Gatwick.' Another bing. Another multiple choice menu, with Gatwick atop. Result!

'Did you mean Gatwick?'

'Yes!'

No response.

'Yuh-esse!'

@thebenpulman



From here you can see how narrow those back doors are. Hope your friends are all supermodels. Short ones...

## LOGBOOK

### MINI COOPER 5DR 1.5

➤ **Engine** 1499cc 12v turbocharged 3-cyl, 134bhp @ 4500-6000rpm, 162lb ft @ 2500-4000rpm  
 ➤ **Gearbox** 6-speed manual, front-wheel drive ➤ **Stats** 8.2sec 0-62mph, 129mph, 109g/km ➤ **Price** £15,855 ➤ **As tested** £21,250 ➤ **Miles this month** 523  
 ➤ **Total miles** 4314 ➤ **Our mpg** 42.6  
 ➤ **Official mpg** 60.1 ➤ **Fuel this month** £65.78 ➤ **Extra costs** £0





## Porsche 911 (997) **MONTH 12** By Tim Pollard

**HAS ANYTHING** gone wrong with our nearly-40,000-mile secondhand 911? Reliability has been robust for the past year, but we've had three blips in quick succession: two minor cosmetic flaws and a rather more ominous PDK fault experienced by two colleagues.

Those quad exhausts are in fact strapped-on finishers. Peer inside and you'll see two smaller pipes within. Someone pointed out we were suffering from wonky pipes, as the right-hand pair had swivelled around. Easily solved by crawling underneath, adjusting the angle and tightening a bracket. Another fault belying this car's six years is a small area of peeling lacquer on the front

bumper; it's not been hit, but I fear a power wash too many may have stressed the top coat.

Of more concern is the transmission warning light and lack of drive suffered by colleagues Ben Miller and Matt Tarrant, both at busy junctions. A simple switch-off-and-on routine fixed it both times and it's not reappeared since. Otherwise, the 997 continues to shine and the flat-six feels bulletproof.

@TimPollardCars

### LOGBOOK PORSCHE 911 CARRERA

> **Price** £69,538 > **As tested** £43,850  
> **Miles this month** 1027 > **Total miles** 39,256 > **Our mpg** 24.8 > **Official mpg** 28.8 > **Fuel this month** £245.77  
> **Extra costs** £0



## Ford Mondeo **MONTH 4** By Chris Chilton

**IT WAS** interesting to discover that despite its huge external dimensions (and generous rear seat space), the Mondeo's boot is actually smaller than the new Volkswagen Passat's. But it's still easily big enough to swallow my kids' bikes, or a Jessop's worth of camera gear, as I discovered on a trip to McLaren this month, so I've no complaints there. Particularly as it comes with a spare wheel, which I much prefer over a can of tyre foam.

But interior storage is another matter. The deep armrest cubby is handy, and there are two big cup holders that can double as phone dumps, but the cubby beneath the centre console is hard to access

because of the huge pillars on either side. I tend not use it, and put stuff in the door bins instead, but for some obscure reason they're partially covered. Stuff is forever sliding into the covered section at the back of the door and you've got to get all James Herriot and shove your arm in elbow deep to retrieve it. Not achievable while driving.

@chrischiltoncar

### LOGBOOK FORD MONDEO TITANIUM 2.0 TDCi

> **Price** £26,865 > **As tested** £31,135  
> **Miles this month** 1754 > **Total miles** 5163 > **Our mpg** 39.2 > **Official mpg** 56.5 > **Fuel this month** £254.49  
> **Extra costs** £0



## BMW M3 **MONTH 8** By Ben Miller

**WHILE SOME MAY** balk at the idea of a £67k car that shares much of its interior architecture with a £24k one, the upside is comfort and sound ergonomics as standard. Honed over decades using teeming ranks of 320d pilots as guinea pigs, almost everything about the inside of the 3-series – and therefore the M3 – just works, even iDrive. BMW's infamous interface has come a long way since its baffling early iterations. Jump aboard and within moments you'll be merrily charging through the M3's various systems, popping Brands Hatch into the nav, re-configuring your preferred M modes (two pre-bundled personal preferences for the various levels of steering, throttle, suspension

and M-diff aggression), dialing-up some much-needed Taylor Swift and checking your oil, even before you're off the drive.

Highlights? The admittedly M3-specific seats and the head-up display. At £825 the HUD, like Waitrose Essential hummus, is hard to describe as indispensable but it is very good, especially the full M set-up with speed (too fast), gear (largely immaterial), revs and speed limit.

### LOGBOOK BMW M3

> **Price** £54,775 > **As tested** £66,785  
> **Miles this month** 836 > **Total miles** 13,209 > **Our mpg** 22.8 > **Official mpg** 32.1 > **Fuel this month** £263.83  
> **Extra costs** £0



## Volvo V60 **MONTH 8** By Phil McNamara

**REACH FOR THE** earplugs: the front right brake is screeching like fingernails down a blackboard. Classic intermittent problem, which disappeared only to start again after the V60 hit a speed bump. So at 15,000 miles, it's time to act on that 'maintenance required' message.

I dropped the V60 off at Marshall Volvo in Peterborough, appreciating the onward lift to the office. When I returned, the freshly cleaned V60 was sporting £95 worth of new Castrol Edge, plus new air and oil filters; the service totalled £287.69. But despite a technician taking the V60 out for an exploratory trundle, there wasn't a peep out of the brakes, and no telltale scoring or anything out of alignment. The

pads were barely worn: a benefit of hybrid e-braking sharing the friction stoppers' workload. Whatever the problem was, the wailing banshee has now been banished.

However, two days later and I'm greeted with 'engine system service required'! Back to Marshall: the two oil sensors were giving conflicting readings, so they reset the system and drained a little oil, while I waited. No error messages since.

@CARPhilMc

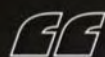
### LOGBOOK VOLVO V60 D6 HYBRID

> **Price** £51,675 > **As tested** £53,150  
> **Miles this month** 1372 > **Total miles** 16,441 > **Our mpg** 45.8 > **Official mpg** 148.7 > **Fuel this month** £165.78  
> **Extra costs** £287.69 first service



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### **DMS 1M (EVO MARCH '12)**

"THERE'S A REAL RIP TO THE WAY THE REVS PILE ON ABOVE 4000RPM"

### **DMS SL65 BLACK SERIES (EVO OCTOBER '10)**

"IT FEELS LIKE THE LOVE CHILD OF AN SL65 AND A PORSCHE GT2"

### **DMS 135i (BMW CAR MAY '09)**

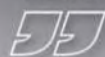
"THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW  
MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

### **DMS 997 TURBO 3.6 (EVO SEPTEMBER '08)**

"IT'S EPIC, HILARIOUS AND ADDICTIVE IN EVERY GEAR,  
YET DOCILE WHEN CRUISING"

### **DMS 997 TURBO 3.8 PDK (EVO JUNE '11)**

"DELIVERY IS ALMOST UNCOMFORTABLY FORCEFUL"



BELOW IS A SMALL SELECTION OF OUR MORE POPULAR MODELS TO  
UPGRADE. WE ARE ABLE TO UNLEASH PERFORMANCE FROM SMALL  
FOUR CYLINDER DIESEL ENGINES UP TO V12 SUPERCARS:

#### **PORSCHE**

997 TURBO/S 3.8 INC PDK » 611 BHP  
997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP  
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP  
996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP  
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP  
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP  
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP  
997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP  
997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP  
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP  
CAYMAN S » 342 BHP  
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP  
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP  
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP  
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP  
CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP  
CAYENNE DIESEL » 300+ BHP  
PANAMERA TURBO » 600+ BHP  
PANAMERA DIESEL » 305+ BHP

#### **MERCEDES-BENZ**

'63' 5.5 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 600+ BHP  
'500' 4.7 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 498+ BHP  
SL65 BLACK » 720+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
SL65 AMG » 690 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
'55' AMG KOMPRESSOR » 580+ BHP  
C63 AMG » 530+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
SL63 AMG » 560+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT,  
RE-MAP & LOWER ABC SUSPENSION)  
CL600 Bi-TURBO » 580+ BHP  
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
SLK 350 » 328 BHP  
220 CDI ALL MODELS » 210+ BHP  
250 CDI ALL MODELS » 259+ BHP  
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP  
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP  
420 /450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP

#### **BMW**

M5/M6 F10 » 620+ BHP  
M5 V10 » 548+ BHP (205 MPH)  
X5M / X6M » 618 BHP  
1M » 411+ BHP  
M3 E90/92 » 445 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
M3 E46 » 370 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
F10 520D » 221 BHP  
F10 530D » 296 BHP  
F10 535D » 358 BHP  
335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
123D » 252 BHP  
330D E90 » 296+ BHP  
320D E90 » 215 BHP  
730D » 290+ BHP  
X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP  
X5 3.0D » 296 BHP  
X6 X50i 4.4 » 500+ BHP  
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP  
M135i Please call

#### **EXOTIC / MISC**

FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP  
FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP  
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP  
GALLARDO » 546 BHP  
LP560 » 600+ BHP  
LP640 » 707 BHP  
MURCIELAGO LP640 » 707 BHP  
MASERATI GT/QPORT » 438 BHP  
MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP  
ALL 2014 MASERATI'S Please call  
AUDI RS6 4.0 T V8 Please call  
AUDI RS6 V10 » 680+ BHP +DE-LIMIT  
AUDI R8 V1 » 592+ BHP  
AUDI RS4/R8 B7 » 439 BHP + DE-LIMIT  
AUDI RS3 » 420+ BHP  
AUDI Q7/A8 4.2 TDi » 400+ BHP  
AUDI 3.0TDi (ALL MODELS) » 300+ BHP  
AUDI S3 / GOLF R » 317+ BHP  
ALL 2014 RANGE ROVERS AVAILABLE  
RANGE ROVER 4.4 TDV8 » 395 BHP  
R ROVER SPORT 3.0D » 305 BHP  
EVOQUE 2.2 DIESEL » 240 BHP  
BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 600+ BHP  
BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR (INC 2013) » 660 BHP  
GT SPEED / SUPERSPORT » 680+ BHP

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# GBU.

Totally unique guide to EVERY car on sale in the UK, with a punchy view on all of them – yours included

## The Good, the Bad & the Ugly

### ABARTH

#### 500 ★★★★★

> Pricey pocket rockets, all powered by 1.4-litre turbos in various stages of steroidal over-compensation. Divine details, dodgy dynamics  
> **VERDICT:** A Vegas wedding: hilarious at first, trickier to endure longer term

### ALFA ROMEO

#### MITO ★★★★★

> Decent engines but generally rubbish to drive, Alfa's soggy-handling, hard-riding premium mini is crucified by the real thing and Audi's A1  
> **VERDICT:** At least it's got its looks. No, wait. It's an ugly Alfa. It's got nothing

#### GIULIETTA ★★★★★

> Looked like a credible Golf rival for a while but now the game has moved on. Keen prices, but rivals are roomier, classier and more fun to drive  
> **VERDICT:** Miles better than a Mito. Miles better than a 4C, even. Miles behind a Mk7 Golf

#### 4C/4C SPIDER ★★★★★

> Sexy carbon two-seater over-promises and under-delivers on a double-your-dong-length web-scam scale. Spider a step in right direction  
> **VERDICT:** Shoots for the moon, hits itself in the foot. Elise more fun, Cayman a better bet

### ALPINA

#### D3/B3 ★★★★★

> Twin-turbo petrol and diesel stonk and smooth auto 'boxes mated to a quality chassis, but watch for some questionable OAP-spec interior finishes  
> **VERDICT:** Try an xDrive D3 Touring – it's what the M3 wants to be when it grows up

#### D4/B4 ★★★★★

> Same blend of fast and frugal as above but slotted into slinkier 4-series shell. ZF auto not as snappy as M4's twin clutch, but much smoother  
> **VERDICT:** 53mpg and 62mph in 4.6sec? And you're alright with this, BMW?

#### D5/B5 ★★★★★

> Twin-turbo B5 petrol V8's 590lb ft could de-forest the Amazon while planet-loving D5 doesn't let meagre 155g/km prevent 174mph max  
> **VERDICT:** M5 alternative with Touring body option you can't have with the real thing

#### B7 ★★★★★

> BMW doesn't make an M7, but Alpina does. Twin-blown petrol V8 delivers 'bahn-busting performance that's best enjoyed in Germany  
> **VERDICT:** Niche S63 alternative hamstrung by ugliness of the raw materials

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### NEW IN THIS MONTH

#### Honda Civic Type R

'Holy turbos! They've created a monster! New Type R produces 306bhp and hits 167mph. Scorched 'Ring included'



p142



#### Renault Kadjar

'Did Nissan leave the Qashqai parts bin store "Kadjar" or did Renault break in like crossover copycat Ninjas? Either way, this is the outcome'

p145

#### Ferrari 488 GTB

'Even the looks grow on you after a while. Rivals better dust off their gracious loser faces'



p141

#### XD3 ★★★★★

> X3 35d-based high-rise hot-rod delivers 350bhp, 516lb ft, and the horizon through your windscreen. Spoiled by a rock-hard ride  
> **VERDICT:** Another niche BMW Munich leaves to Alpina, maybe 'cos Porsche Macan is better

### ARIEL

#### ATOM ★★★★★

> Only the Pope's lips get more up close and personal with the tarmac than an Atom driver, but there's zero protection when the heavens

open  
> **VERDICT:** You'll be a driving god on the track, and now in the mud, thanks to Baja-style Nomad spin-off

### ASTON MARTIN

#### VANTAGE ★★★★★

> Ageing entry level Aston has ace steering, but make sure you go manual: plodding semi-auto is as dynamic as a Ron Dennis interview  
> **VERDICT:** Longer in the tooth than Brucie, but constant updating means it's still desirable

#### VANTAGE V12 ★★★★★

> Cramping huge V12 into Vantage's V8-sized engine bay makes for a track weapon that thinks it's a hot rod. Superb chassis, but another duff 'box  
> **VERDICT:** Crazy car, but not as crazy as the price – almost £40k more than a 911 GT3...

#### DB9 ★★★★★

> Recently re-skinned, and now with 8-spd ZF auto. Our long termers had 'bespoke concerns' (the trustworthiness of a crack-addicted bank

casher)  
> **VERDICT:** A beautiful GT, but same money buys more exciting V12 Vantage

#### VANQUISH ★★★★★

> Looking like the old DBS after 10 sessions of lipo, Vanquish's exquisite detailing hides modern carbon structure, but performance is a decade out  
> **VERDICT:** Heart says buy, until a Ferrari F12 says bye-bye

#### RAPIDE ★★★★★

> Take that, Panamera! Aston shows Porsche how to make a supercar/saloon cocktail. Forget limo pretensions though, it's a four-door 2+2  
> **VERDICT:** Pretty, but interior more dated than a New York socialite and as hard on your wallet

### AUDI

#### A1 HATCH/SPORTBACK ★★★★★

> Posh Polo does it all, from 1.0 miser to S1 micro rocket. Not cheap, even before you've splurged on options. £30k is a mouse click away  
> **VERDICT:** Classy Mini rival that doesn't turn into Quasimodo when you tick the 5dr option

#### A3 HATCH/S/BACK/SALOON ★★★★★

> Your passengers will be in awe of the refinement and finish, unless they're nursing knees bashed in the back of the shorter three-door shell  
> **VERDICT:** Brilliant hatch and not much financial gulf to a Golf. Try sporty S-Line on supple SE chassis

#### A3 CABRIOLET ★★★★★

> Premium sun-grabber without macho sports-car posturing. A bit tight in the back, but pretty tight in the bends too. Try a 1.8 TFSi with Sport trim  
> **VERDICT:** Asexual drop-top for sensible shoes types. Worth the £2k premium over Golf

#### S3/RS3 ★★★★★

> Further proof that the Germans are still power junkies at heart. 296bhp S3 is trouble enough, while new 362bhp RS3 will do 174mph. Achtung, baby.  
> **VERDICT:** Far better than they used to be, but not as exciting as they should be. Buy a Golf R

#### A4 SALOON/AVANT/ALLROAD ★★★★★

> Creaky A4 still looks the part but us and it will be put out of our misery later this year when new one arrives. Duff ride, dated dash, decent engines  
> **VERDICT:** Never class leading when new, and that was in 2008! C-class is better

#### RS4 ★★★★★

> Brutal RS treatment makes a monster of hum A4. No 4dr, no manual and no turbos, this wicked wagon's V8 redlines higher than Ferrari's 488GTB  
> **VERDICT:** Pace and space, but rides like the tyres have a tic. No match for new C63

#### A5 SPORTBACK ★★★★★

> In a class of one until BMW finally got its act, and the 4-series Gran Coupe, together. Pretty and practical, but like its drivers, feeling its age  
> **VERDICT:** Fatherhood doesn't seem so bad with family cars this handsome. Then you drive it



**A5 COUPE/CABRIO ★★★★★**

> Like a 4ft 8in Miss World, stunning A5 has the looks but not the legs. Yours will suffer too thanks to offset pedals and zero rear legroom  
**> VERDICT:** Buying now? BMW 4-series. Feeling patient? Wait for 2016's stunning C-class coupe

**RS5 ★★★★★**

> Has iconic Quattro arches, but feels like it was engineered down the Arches at Phil Mitchell's *EastEnders* den of bodgery. Cramped too  
**> VERDICT:** Great V8 can't save misfiring flat-footed coupe. Buy a BMW M4, or the better RS4

**A6 SALOON/AVANT/ALLROAD ★★★★★**

> Demure big Audi an unsung hero, refined and cheap to run. Allroad an SUV for agrophobics; twin-blown 309bhp BiTDi a proper mischief maker  
**> VERDICT:** Base models short on wow, but a solid alternative to better-handling Jag XF

**RS6 ★★★★★**

> For wealthy mentalists who think the S6's 444bhp isn't enough, RS6 delivers 25% more and gives the new R8 V10 a hard time at the lights  
**> VERDICT:** Beautifully finished all-weather family wagon that scares supercars silly

**A7 SPORTBACK ★★★★★**

> Slant-roof A6 takes styling cues from pretty '60s 100 coupe but can't out-cool Merc's CLS. More grippy than a sloth whose been sloppy with the superglue  
**> VERDICT:** Stylish GT with sensible engines, but a sports saloon? My RS, maybe

**RS7 ★★★★★**

> Pricier, less practical RS6 with fastback rear, same guts but gets clever rear diff as standard for oversteer here, there and everywhere given room  
**> VERDICT:** An Aston Rapide for the AA-graphobic, but we'd have the naughtier RS6

**A8 SALOON ★★★★★**

> Audi's elder statesman for elder statesmen has more tech than CES at Vegas but who wants people to think they're being chauffeured in an A4?  
**> VERDICT:** Gadgets galore, but Merc's incredible S-class nails the luxury basics better

**Q3 ★★★★★**

> Dumpy dinky faux field forager is a yummy mummy fave. Forget 4wd and the diesels and go for light, zippy, 1.4 TFSI  
**> VERDICT:** So much better to drive than it looks. Which it'd have to be, right? Unless it was an Alfa

**RSQ3 ★★★★★**

> Audi's first tall-boy RS model. Hearing of the £45k price or unleashing that 335bhp five-pot both elicit same incredulous gasp  
**> VERDICT:** Who needs this stuff? Short people in a rush? What we do know is it's better than a GLA45 AMG

**Q5 ★★★★★**

**REPLACED SOON**  
 > Car-like SUV offers everything from meek 180bhp front driver to a ballistic SQ5 bi-turbo diesel delivering RS performance without the fuel bills  
**> VERDICT:** Still one of Audi's best. Beats a top-spec A4, if not a bottom-spec Macan

**Q7 ★★★★★**

> Formerly massive 7-seat SUV with Titanic-like wildness morphs into massive 7-seat jacked-up estate car in new Mk2 guise  
**> VERDICT:** Lighter and less thirsty than before, but still less charming than Jean-Claude Juncker

**TT COUPE/ROADSTER ★★★★★**

> Brilliant coupe gets virtual dash, and sharper handling. Try 2.0-FSI. Boot big, but rear seats for handbags only (some men have them, you know)  
**> VERDICT:** A proper real-world sports car – but same money buys an early R8!

**R8 V10/V10 PLUS ★★★★★**

> Friday afternoon restyle meets Monday morning mechanics. New R8 offers no V8 for now, but V10 is back with 532bhp or Lambo-equaling 602bhp  
**> VERDICT:** Not driven it yet, but could beat Huracan sister for half the price

**BAC****MONO ★★★★★**

> Single-seat racer that took a wrong turn out of the pits features pushrod suspension, Cosworth-tuned 2.3 Duratec and bath-like driving position  
**> VERDICT:** Sublime track-tool with a six-figure price that'd net you a Cayman GT4 and an Atom

**BENTLEY****CONTINENTAL GT COUPE/CABRIO ★★★★★**

> The repmobile of millionaires. Reliable, well-built and yes, full of VW bits. Death Star smooth W12 now sounds more rebellious, while twin-turbo GT V8 S is joyful  
**> VERDICT:** More of a sports car than its hefty GT image suggests

**CONTINENTAL GT3-R ★★★★★**

> Bonkers road racer with Max Power styling, no rear seats and shouty exhaust. Surprisingly nimble using 4wd and torque vectoring, and epically fast thanks to tricked up 580 V8  
**> VERDICT:** Uncouth drag racer for rich Russians

**FLYING SPUR ★★★★★**

> New Spur is sharper to drive, sharper to look at, softer to sit in, and feels less like a stretched Conti. Fridge and iPads essential options for pampered rear-seat recliners  
**> VERDICT:** Think of it as a bargain Roller rather than a pricey A8

**MULSANNNE ★★★★★**

> Huge, handbuilt anachronism, with twin-turbo V8 born in the '50s, buffed to perfection, and a field of cows sacrificed for your arse's pleasure  
**> VERDICT:** Buy the Speed – any less outrageous display of consumption is just poor form

**BMW****1-SERIES ★★★★★**

> Only rear-driver in its class. Good for handling, not for cabin space. Just facelifted so now 3% less grotesque. 118i petrol a brilliant all-rounder  
**> VERDICT:** Want a roomy, well-appointed hatch that's great to drive and look at? Buy an A3

**M135i ★★★★★**

> Last of the downsizing deniers, BMW's hot hatch stays with six-pot power when all rivals offer four. Undercuts mechanically identical M235i by £4.5k  
**> VERDICT:** Storming drivetrain, but VW's incredible Golf R just pips it

**2-SERIES COUPE/CABRIO ★★★★★**

> Boot-faced booted 1-series is a Mustang with a couple of A-levels. 218d is 8.9 to 62mph and 63mpg; 4cyl 228i a cut-price, cut-down M235i  
**> VERDICT:** Plainier than a margarine sarnie, but TT and RCZ can't touch its space/pace combo

**M235i ★★★★★**

> Shoestring M3 quicker than a Cayman and almost as costly if you're profligate with options. 322bhp std; 380bhp just a Superchip away  
**> VERDICT:** Satisfyingly simple and a blast to drive. Coupe shell + manual 'box = purest thrills

**2-SERIES ACTIVE TOURER ★★★★★**

**BEST IN CLASS**  
 > BMW in front-drive MPV shock. Decent drive, great interior. Need to cart OAP relatives around? You'll need the 7-seat Gran Tourer. Boom boom!  
**> VERDICT:** The ultimate driving (to the park/crèche/post office) machine

**i3 ★★★★★**

> One of BMW's best cars is home to its finest cabin. Electric version has short range; hybrid is noisy and has a fuel tank like a flea's hip flask  
**> VERDICT:** Carbon chassis supermini, electric power and £30k price. Did we wake up in 2045?

**3-SERIES SALOON/TOURING ★★★★★**

**FACELIFT SOON**  
 > Celebrating four decades of overpriced, undersized family cars. Which to buy? Hard to argue with 320d's 7.5sec to 62mph and 61mpg  
**> VERDICT:** Still great, but new C-class makes it seem as soothing as wet and dry bog roll

**3-SERIES GT ★★★★★**

> High-rise Touring alternative almost as vast as a 5-series thanks to wheelbase stretch, but way more hideous. Another BMW design disaster  
**> VERDICT:** A £35k Mondeo with a BMW badge. Why bother when the same-price X3 is so good?

**M3 ★★★★★**

> M3 means saloon only; coupe is M4. Both ditch V8 for 425bhp twin-turbo six with choice of manual or DCT auto. Still no xDrive 4x4 – for now  
**> VERDICT:** Rapid but rowdy M3 is more fun than new C63 AMG, but harder to live with

**4-SERIES COUPE/CABRIO ★★★★★**

> 3-series in a shell suit subtly better to drive, but same great engine choices and almost as

## Number crunching

### THE 10 MOST PROLIFIC BRITISH-BUILT CARS

According to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders these are the UK's top 10 ranked by 2014 production numbers



**285,000**  
**Nissan Qashqai**  
 BUILT: SUNDERLAND EMPLOYEES: 6000  
 Second-gen proto-crossover they can't build quick enough



**179,000**  
**Mini**  
 BUILT: OXFORD EMPLOYEES: 4000  
 Every version of the main Mini family is built in the UK



**140,000**  
**Toyota Auris**  
 BUILT: BURNASTON EMPLOYEES: 3800  
 Proof that inoffensive mediocrity still sells when it's reliable



**133,000**  
**Nissan Juke**  
 BUILT: SUNDERLAND EMPLOYEES: 6000  
 Qashqai's little brother following in the family footsteps



**127,000**  
**Range Rover Evoque**  
 BUILT: HALEWOOD EMPLOYEES: 4000  
 The fastest selling Land Rover ever gets a facelift later this year



**86,000**  
**Range Rover Sport**  
 BUILT: SOLIHULL EMPLOYEES: 10,000  
 Given the price premium, is this or the Evoque the greater success story?



**78,000**  
**Vauxhall Astra**  
 BUILT: ELLESMERE PORT EMPLOYEES: 2100  
 This year's 7th gen Astra follows previous six all built in Cheshire



**65,000**  
**Nissan Note**  
 BUILT: SUNDERLAND EMPLOYEES: 6000  
 Juke too wild? Don't worry, gran, the Note's made here, too



**57,000**  
**Range Rover**  
 BUILT: SOLIHULL EMPLOYEES: 10,000  
 More Range Rovers are built in the UK than Honda CR-Vs



**54,000**  
**Honda CR-V**  
 BUILT: SWINDON EMPLOYEES: 3400  
 More Honda CR-Vs are built in the UK than Honda Civics...

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practical. Shame about the carryover cabin > **VERDICT:** Crushes Audi's ancient A5. Folding hardtop cabrio weighty but worth it

## 4-SERIES GRAN COUPE ★★★★★

> Pretty and practical, like a bikini car wash, hatchback GC costs £3k more than 3-series but has std leather. Five belts but only four seats > **VERDICT:** Smart and useful, much more than a niche exercise. But why isn't this the 3-series?

## M4 ★★★★★

> Two-door M3 is now M4 with twin-turbo 6-pot. Choose coupe or tubby cabrio, or upcoming water-injected GTS track version > **VERDICT:** Dynamite drift machine's mega mid-range comes at the expense of the old V8's charisma

## 5-SERIES SALOON/TOURING ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Hard to fault the default exec. Go for 520d or 530d M Sport, ZF auto, adaptive dampers. Ace adaptive headlamps a £545 option > **VERDICT:** Stylish as Teflon trousers but that drip-dry gusset is just so handy. Best exec bar none

## 5-SERIES GT ★★★★★

> BMW GB: 'The contours... make its attraction instant. Stylish presence of a saloon combines harmoniously with the sporty elegance of a coupe' > **VERDICT:** Munich's Vel Satis. Hated by critics, loved by owners. All three of them

## M5 ★★★★★

> While our enthusiasm for the twin-turbo V8 is tempered slightly by the artificial engine noise, it's sublime to drive and gets better with every iteration > **VERDICT:** Still the fast saloon daddy. 592bhp '30 Jahre edition' utterly magnificent

## 6-SERIES COUPE/CABRIO ★★★★★

> Anonymous big GT best enjoyed with mighty 40d diesel power. Plenty of room for four – if you fire your passengers into the back via a wood-chipper > **VERDICT:** Under-the-radar GT bruiser, short on sex, but not on appeal

## 6-SERIES GRAN COUPE ★★★★★

> Coupe? It's a bloody saloon! And £20k more than a same-engined 5-series! BMW must chuckle at every sale. Still, rather nice > **VERDICT:** Desirable enough to leave the 6-series coupe in the shade, and in the showroom

## M6 ★★★★★

> Six-figure M5 in a shiny suit is even better to drive. Two-door looks good value beside Merc's S63 coupe, but can't touch a 911 GT3 for kicks > **VERDICT:** M6 GC almost makes M5 redundant, but at £100k/18mpg you'll need two jobs

## 7-SERIES ★★★★★

**REPLACED SOON** > Bull-nose luxury barge not long for this world and we won't be sending flowers. Drives well, looks awful and the ride fidgets like a toddler with ADHD > **VERDICT:** Takes luxury to K2-heights, but the S-class rocks it up to Everest

## X1 ★★★★★

**REPLACED SOON** > Despite the 1 tag, this dowdy crossover is based on old 3-series. So, great engines and chassis, but cabin makes a Dacia feel glam > **VERDICT:** Fugly but decent faux-by-four that's cheaper than a 3-series Touring. We'll take the 3

## X3 ★★★★★

> Studiously un-gangsta SUV shuns petrol power – and M Power – options for solid diesel-only blend of handling and handiness. Looking better post facelift > **VERDICT:** The BMW SUV we don't hate ourselves for liking

## X4 ★★★★★

> Blame the Evoque and people who bought the X6 for this carbuncle. £4-5k more than an X3, but better equipped and annoyingly better to drive > **VERDICT:** Depressing X3 spin-off for grown-ups who still dream of being a footballer

## X5 ★★★★★

> One-time Premier League fave looking more like League 1 beside better-driving, and -looking rivals. Skinfint sDrive 25d is a rwd four-banger > **VERDICT:** Still impresses with engines and quality, but thanks to Landle it's lost its lustre

## X6 ★★★★★

> All the impracticality of a coupe and all the wasteful high-centred mass of an SUV. Genius. If you must, X40d gives best price/punch/parimony > **VERDICT:** Pointless pimp wagon. Buy a Porsche Cayenne or even an X5

## Z4 ★★★★★

> Sports car for post-menopausal women in lemon trouser suits. Coupe-cabrio roof hits boot space when folded. Base 181 spec sub-Wartburg > **VERDICT:** No match for Boxster. Stick with mid-spec trim. And keep taking the evening primrose

## i8 ★★★★★

> Carbon-constructed 3-cyl hybrid supercar that's fun for four, as fast as an M3 and does 40 real mpg. Minor demerit: looks like it's crimping off a 911 > **VERDICT:** Fascinating and fabulous. The future of the sports car is in safe hands

## BUGATTI

## VEYRON ★★★★★

**REPLACED SOON** > A decade on, still the ultimate hypercar, although more limited editions than a Vauxhall Nova take some lustre off W16-powered redefinition of what's possible > **VERDICT:** Promise, La Finale is the end of an amazing era – will we ever see its like again?

## CATERHAM

## SEVEN ★★★★★

> Still the benchmark for bobble-hatted Terry Thomas wannabes, the adaptable Seven comes in flavours from 160 3-cyl to mental road racers > **VERDICT:** 80bhp 160 underpowered, 310bhp 620R lethal, 180bhp 360 model just right

## CHEVROLET

## CORVETTE ★★★★★

> Farm machinery meets space lab in fabulous 460bhp V8 symphony of composite materials, leaf springs and push rods. Shame it's left-hook only > **VERDICT:** £60k for a bargain berserker. £20k more for the 650bhp Z06

## CHRYSLER

## 300C ★★★★★

**DIES SOON** > Now looking like a Chinese rip-off of the original 300C rather than an American rip-off of a Bentley, with a V6 diesel engine that's comically inefficient > **VERDICT:** Really want a go in a 300C? Rent one of those pink hen-do specials

## CITROEN

## C-ZERO ★★★★★

> Remember when electric cars were expensive, oddly packaged, with hardly any range? If not, refresh your memory with a C-Zero > **VERDICT:** £6k for a Tupperware box. There are cheaper ways to carry your sandwiches to work

## C1 ★★★★★

> Trying desperately hard to escape the clutches of its sister cars, the C1 can have a funky Aircscape cloth roof and half-hearted personalisation options. 1.0-litre has most pep > **VERDICT:** Good, solid proletarian urban fare rather than hipster cool

## C3 ★★★★★

> Serious sibling rivalry issues as dull C3 loses out to dashing DS3. Now handles a bit better after a refresh, and has five doors. The end > **VERDICT:** If you're not even the most talented in your family, how are you going to beat the rest?

## C3 PICASSO ★★★★★

> Compact supermini-based box that's fun to drive (avoiding the petrol one, mind) and well-packaged. Might not set pulses racing, but you'll get very protective of it > **VERDICT:** They can take the piss, but it's a faithful, lovable friend

## C4 ★★★★★

> Recently refreshed C4 has all the edginess of a Hush Puppy deck shoe. But it's useful, anodyne transport and sub-100g/km BlueHDI models are very economical > **VERDICT:** Nobody would hate you – or notice you – if you bought one

## C4 CACTUS ★★★★★

> An architect's wet dream. Sloppy to drive but otherwise a roomy family car with kid's toy colour combos. Airbumps will stop it kicking off in the car park > **VERDICT:** Cheap yet brilliant. Why can't the French be this good all the time?

## C5 SALOON/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Be aware: this car is still in existence. Slow selling but roomy estate is fairly stylish and practical with Hydractive rear suspension > **VERDICT:** There have been great French family saloons. This is not one

## C4 PICASSO ★★★★★

> Defiantly anti-cool family shifter. Touches like lower rear windows and spirograph mirror make mums go weak at the knees for its peace-and-bloody-quiet ambience > **VERDICT:** Drives like a shed. Who cares, if Satan's brood shut up?

## BERLINGO MULTISPACE ★★★★★

> Recently refreshed with SUV aspirations, but still a hard-wearing, wipe-clean tin lifeboat for cagoule-wearing Thermos-sipping birdwatchers. Rattles and drives like a van. Is a van > **VERDICT:** Dogging cheapseats for aspiring Bill Oddie

## DS3 HATCH/CABRIO ★★★★★

> Surprise winner clad in John Lewis wallpaper prints. A middle-class rethinking of an average supermini. But even sporty 155bhp lacks sparkle > **VERDICT:** Goes with your tablecloth and handbag. Gallic chic still desirable, done right

## DS4 ★★★★★

> Jacked up hatchback that's not an SUV, but is sportier than a C4 but not actually very athletic. Work that out. Cool helicopter alloys, though > **VERDICT:** Found: if you recognise this car, please write to 1 de Gaulle Street, Paris, France

## DS5 ★★★★★

> Office joker in testosterone world of Serious Business Men. Quite appealing, with a lovely aerostyled cabin. Diesel Hybrid4 a good idea not executed properly > **VERDICT:** Bland ubiquity will always beat charming quirkiness

## DACIA

## SANDERO ★★★★★

> Cheapest new car on sale not the worst. Yoghurt-pot plastics and pre-Glasnost styling can't detract from a spacious sub-six grand runabout with Renault engines > **VERDICT:** Austerity rocks. Right, Greece?

## LOGAN ★★★★★

> Estate looks like a Sandero that's reversed into phone box. Cavernous boot, but dreadfully unrefined thanks to all the brittle plastic and tin > **VERDICT:** You put things in it. It will carry them for you. You can take them out. Job done

## DUSTER ★★★★★

> No-nonsense SUV that's ideal for wannabe peacekeepers on a ridiculously small budget. Buy the boggy 4x4 diesel in white for the full UN effect > **VERDICT:** The Neighbourhood Watch will never be the same again

## FERRARI

## 488 GTB ★★★★★

**NEW ENTRY** > We were worried the turbos would ruin it, but while we'll miss the 458's 9000rpm wail, the 488 is more playful and even easier to drive. A stunning achievement > **VERDICT:** Even the looks grow on you after a while. Rivals better dust off their gracious loser faces

## CALIFORNIA T ★★★★★

> L-plate Ferrari first of Maranello's new turbo cars. Boost management mimics naturally aspirated engines. Looks better, sounds worse > **VERDICT:** Forget the unfair 458 comparisons, it's an SL65 rival and well worthy of the badge

## F12 ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Jumbo GT with 700bhp turns like a supercar, cruises like a limo and drifts like a nitrous-guzzling M3. 458 gets the girl but this is the better car > **VERDICT:** Multi-talented coupe makes Aventador look as sophisticated as a Piedmontese peasant

## LaFERRARI ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > 1000bhp hybrid hypercar where the electric bits exist to save tenths not icecups. 499 to be built and all sold despite the £1.2m asking price > **VERDICT:** The greatest single supercar of all time – except maybe the FXX K track version

## FF ★★★★★

> Supercar meets Scimitar in this luxurious two-door wagon with a fiendishly clever on-demand 4wd system via second gearbox > **VERDICT:** Like an arranged marriage, love grows from respect, and certainly not at first sight

## FIAT

## PANDA ★★★★★

> Spacious city car with 'squirrel' obsession, as roly-poly as the blobby looks suggest. Two-pot TwinAir willing but thirsty when pushed > **VERDICT:** VW Up costs less, drives better and is nicer inside. Grin and bear it?

## 500/C ★★★★★

**FACELIFT SOON** > Panda in a retro frock is still a darling amongst trendy urbanites. Endless special editions keep it fresh, driving dynamics keep us underwhelmed > **VERDICT:** Style over substance and a crashy ride. But the style is in high supply

## 500L/MPW ★★★★★

> Bloated supermini-sized people carriers, desperately attempting to cash in on city car's chic. Seldom has the point been so massively missed > **VERDICT:** In-car coffee machine option the only purchase excuse

## 500X ★★★★★

> Compact crossover is Arnold Schwarzenegger of the 500 range – steroidal and somewhat limited in its range of abilities, but actually rather likeable > **VERDICT:** Worthy Nissan Juke alternative works the 500 thing surprisingly well

## PUNTO ★★★★★

> Been facelifted more times than Joan Rivers but is somehow still alive. Now reduced to bare-bones range and budget price. We still wouldn't > **VERDICT:** You might be tempted. Don't be

## QUBO / DOBLO ★★★★★

> Postman Pat's family wheels? Don't be daft, Pat's retired to the Caribbean and is living off the licencing rights. Drives a Bentley. A red one > **VERDICT:** Van-based MPVs that put practicality first, people second

## FORD

## KA ★★★★★

> Take one Fiat 500, marginally improve the dynamics then snatch defeat from victory with dull restyle that removes entire reason to purchase > **VERDICT:** Ford's worst car. Noisy, slow, plasticity, too expensive. Buy a used Fiesta

## B-MAX ★★★★★

> B-pillar-free Fiesta-based mini MPV gets rear sliding doors for maximum practicality but not the sliding rear seats of some rivals. Firm ride > **VERDICT:** Buy with a 1.0 Ecoboost triple and Zetec trim for maximum school-run fun

## FIESTA ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Still brilliant after all these years, Fiesta is poised and practical. Terrific new triples make up for an interior that would make the Chinese blush > **VERDICT:** The best driving supermini. Even 1.0 models feel like hot hatches in waiting

## FIESTA ST ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Feisty Fiesta is fluent where the flat-footed Focus falls. Trying say that quickly with the 180bhp Ecoboost on full reheat: f-ing fatiguing > **VERDICT:** Definitive affordable hot hatch spoiled only by square-wheels ride

## ECOSPORT ★★★★★

> Third-world hand-me-down is no fun to drive and reasonably roomy interior ruined by a daft side-opening tailgate. Nissan Juke monsters it > **VERDICT:** A rare Blue Oval balls-up channelling the complacent Mk5 Escort spirit

## FOCUS HATCH/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Looking all the better for its 2014 refresh, the Focus shows Ford's chassis engineers know their stuff. So it's just the designers who have lost it > **VERDICT:** Great to drive but the Golf is a more polished destination for your dough



## FOCUS ST ★★★★★

> Storming turbo four sounds so good it's almost more than your ears can take. Also more than the front tyres are able to deal with > **VERDICT:** Exciting, but so's contemplating throwing yourself from the Shard. Buy a GTI

## MONDEO HATCH/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Delayed so long dealers will soon be doing MOTs and PDIs at the same time. Huge space and you can even have the 1.0 EcoBoost > **VERDICT:** Everybody wants them new-fangled SUVs these days, but this is a great family car

## KUGA ★★★★★

> Fine-handling MPV now available with a 178bhp diesel – but not a dashboard that doesn't look like an earthquake in a switchgear factory. Small boot > **VERDICT:** Good, but top-end versions stray into X3/Evoque territory

## C-MAX/GRAND C-MAX ★★★★★

> More a roomier Focus than full-blown MPV, C-Max delivers driving pleasure to blot out family pain. 7-seat Grand version gets rear sliding doors > **VERDICT:** Rivals are roomier, but none is better to drive. Just pretend it's the wife's

## S-MAX ★★★★★

> Tech-obsessed new S-Max exploits latest Mondeo's undercrackers to full effect. Pricey, but still the best of the seven-seaters to drive > **VERDICT:** Toys include electric everything and speed-correcting cruise control. Harder to beat than FC Barcelona

## MUSTANG ★★★★★

> GI Henry's finally been posted to Europe and he's cutting in on the TT's dance. At last gets multi-link rear end, but rear-space could be better > **VERDICT:** EcoBoost 4-cyl torquey but tedious; it's the V8 you want, if not its 18mpg thirst

## GALAXY ★★★★★

> Full-size seven-seater MPV is Barry White to S-Max's James Brown – smooth, substantial and still got the groove when you want to get down > **VERDICT:** No other bus this big does what this can; keep your soul alive on the school run

## GINETTA

## G40 ★★★★★

> Pint-sized road-legal racer. Two models: G40R (civilised version, with carpets) and GRDC (actually a race car with numberplates) > **VERDICT:** Tiny, twitchy and top fun. Pick the £35k GRDC and you get entry to a racing championship thrown in

## HONDA

## JAZZ ★★★★★

> Brilliantly packaged supermini suffers typical genius-level mismatch of brain:social skills. Ordinary performance, extraordinarily unrefined > **VERDICT:** If a Skoda Fabia had seats this smart, every other supermini would call it a day

## CIVIC HATCH/TOURER ★★★★★

> Wilfully different, won't-fully-want-one Ford rival whose big draw is its origami rear seats. 167mph Type-R lands soon (expect big skid

marks) > **VERDICT:** Capacious wagon makes most sense but a Golf is still more satisfying

## CIVIC TYPE R ★★★★★

> Holy turbos! They've created a monster. Furious new 2.0-litre Type R produces 306bhp and hits 167mph. Scorched 'Ring included > **VERDICT:** Did Dr Frankenstein do the exterior design? If you can live with the looks you'll love the performance

## ACCORD SALOON/TOURER ★★★★★

> Ancient second-rate Mondeo rival dies any day, killed off by the market's move to SUVs – and ambivalence to overpriced ordinary saloons > **VERDICT:** Mid-table Championship side to the Mondeo's Champions League winner

## CR-V ★★★★★

> Roomy but unremarkable SUV with a choice of two- or four-wheel drive. Unlike most Hondas won't need ear defenders to drown out road noise > **VERDICT:** Kuga has the chassis, Qashqai has the style, but neither is as practical as CR-V

## HYUNDAI

## i10 ★★★★★

> Five-door city car that balances mature driving experience with strong value – even if it's not as cheap as it was. Five-year warranty, too > **VERDICT:** Basic motoring done not just well but with a dash of style. Mid-spec 1.0 our choice

## i20 ★★★★★

> No Fiesta to drive, but it's not as far off as you'd think, while the refinement and comfort offer plenty of compensation for the plain interior > **VERDICT:** Like a pair of corduroy slippers: comfy but rather suggests you've given up on sex

## i30 HATCH/TOURER ★★★★★

> Where the current crop of Hyundais got serious – which means it's now in need of a facelift as the mainstream moves ahead again > **VERDICT:** 'Tries hard but lacks imagination' would be the i30's school report card

## i40 SALOON/TOURER ★★★★★

> Vast Mondeo rival with huge boot and lots of standard kit. Facelift resembles a lizard with an Audi grille for a mouth > **VERDICT:** Nearly-but-not-quite mainstream alternative plays value card well

## ix20 ★★★★★

> Compact MPV and Kia Venga's ugly step-sister; roomy and accommodating but ultimately forgettable > **VERDICT:** Sorry, what were we talking about?

## ix35 ★★★★★

> Slabby looks but neat to drive and nicely built, making the ix35 a worthy Kuga rival. All-new Tucson replaces it soon > **VERDICT:** Not bad at all, but replacement should be even better

## SANTA FE ★★★★★

> Biggish SUV has always led Hyundai's assault on the European market from the front. Comfortable, self-assured and easy to live with > **VERDICT:** A Hyundai you can choose without shame. Looks fresher than Waitrose parsnips

## i800 ★★★★★

> Massive van-based people carrier that'll seat eight and still have space for their luggage. Ideal for part-time airport mini-cabbers > **VERDICT:** It is what it is: a van with seats in. But it's a nice van

## GENESIS ★★★★★

> Luxury saloon hamstrung by unsuitable petrol engine and they-must-be-joking price tag. Has silly new winged badge and handles like a waterbed > **VERDICT:** Step one of Hyundai's move upmarket. Well, it worked for Infiniti. Oh, wait...

## INFINITI

## Q50 ★★★★★

> Another American-market Japanese premium product that's lost in translation. Shame it wasn't lost at sea on the way over. Hybrid mega quick > **VERDICT:** Like a tiny speck of fluff the Mercedes C-class casually brushes from its sleeve

## Q60 COUPE/CABRIO ★★★★★

> Nissan 370Z after a back, sack 'n' crack. No diesel but V6 sounds ace and S models (4ws and LSD) are tidy in the bends. Looks dated > **VERDICT:** Not without merit, but without a hope of talking us out of buying a BMW 4-series

## Q70 ★★★★★

> Does it look like a rubbish Maser QP, or a slightly cooler Daewoo Leganza? Either way it's a novelty act without the novelty > **VERDICT:** Worth considering over a 5-series, but only if Harald Quandt ran off with your wife

## QX50 ★★★★★

> Blandly-styled EX crossover got a new badge but precious few new fans. Well equipped, but costly to run and not that great to drive > **VERDICT:** Nothing to see here people, move on – to your local BMW dealer and its excellent X3

## XF SALOON/SPORTBRAKE ★★★★★

> Still showing the Germans how to make a car steer. Still not listening when they tell it how to do interior quality and electrics. Splurge for V6 diesel > **VERDICT:** Shut your eyes and you're in a sports car (then a field). New one this summer

## XFR ★★★★★

> Massively capable but terminally tweed-wrapped M5 rival that's £10k cheaper, and 20% less rabid, than the real thing. Occasional traction > **VERDICT:** Great chassis; great shame the superb XFR-S looks like such a dog's dinner

## XJ ★★★★★

> Questionable styling but unquestionably excellent to drive and with a cabin fit for a Bentley. Lwb cars get extra 125mm of rear room > **VERDICT:** Get a blindfold and guide dog to help you to and from the door and you'll love it

## XJR ★★★★★

> Absurdly track-ready limo builds on already ballistic XJ Supersport, but bumps power up to 543bhp and tightens chassis (at expense of ride) > **VERDICT:** More rare-groove than Elvis's first acetate, but spectacular – if you're front

## F-TYPE COUPE/ROADSTER ★★★★★

> Posh pauper's Aston sounds superb, goes well too. Forget basic V6 and choose from V6S and mental V8S. Now with manual and 4wd options > **VERDICT:** So nearly sublime, but Cayman/Boxster duo cost less, entertain more

## F-TYPE R ★★★★★

> Ferocious rear-drive coupe-only R gets 543bhp and uprated chassis for an even sharper drive that's less knife-edge than the V8S soft-top > **VERDICT:** Unlike other F-type coupes, this one is £5k more than equivalent cabrio, but feels it

## SSANGYONG TURISMO

“Has minicab written all over it, or soon will, which will handily help disguise the ugliness”

## QX70 ★★★★★

> Striking jumbo jeep comes with more kit than a Knight Rider convention but the lavish cabin is too small and the fuel and tax bills anything but > **VERDICT:** Taxi for Infiniti! Porsche's Cayenne has this one covered, old timer

## JAGUAR

## XE ★★★★★

> Straight-bat styling hides exotic aluminium chassis and class-leading handling. Bit tight on space though, and engines not a high point > **VERDICT:** Rivals are better packaged but this is the driver's car in the class and a proper little Jag

## JEEP

## RENEGADE ★★★★★

> Strange but true: yooof-targeting junior Jeep is built in Italy alongside Fiat 500X that donates its platform. Even stranger: it's not terrible > **VERDICT:** Lower spec models outdriven by rivals; only the top Trailhawk cuts it in the rough

## CHEROKEE ★★★★★

> Gimlet-eyed Disco post-Fiat Cherokee looks like the banjo-playing inbred from *Deliverance*. Despite generous kit count, we'd leave it on the porch > **VERDICT:** Feels too cheap to be premium, too pricey/ugly to beat Qashqai

## GRAND CHEROKEE ★★★★★

> Proper off-road credentials backed up by sensible running costs, but feels cheap.





# THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY.

Ludicrous SRT8 version demolishes 62mph in five dead > **VERDICT:** Makes sense at \$30k in the US, but doesn't drive or feel like a premium car

## WRANGLER ★★★★★

> Incredible off-road, and much better than a Defender on it, but that's like saying Pol Pot was more benevolent than Stalin. 2.8 Merc diesel best > **VERDICT:** When North Korea nukes us, this cold war cast-off will be all that's left moving

## KOENIGSEGG

## AGERA ★★★★★

> Evolution of Lex Luthor's original CC8S supercar features twin-turbo 5.0 V8 and carbon fibre wheels. R version even runs on E85 biofuel > **VERDICT:** Yahoo! Yin to Volvo's yawning yang keeps Sweden's car output balanced

## ONE:1 ★★★★★

> Derives name from measuring 1360 in both bhp and kg. So fast (0-249mph in 20sec) they call it a 'megacar' (hypercars are sub-1000bhp) > **VERDICT:** Suddenly looks almost sane beside new 1500bhp Koenigsegg Regera plug-in hybrid

## KIA

## PICANTO ★★★★★

> Tough-looking budget Korean mini twinned with less funky Hyundai i10. Three-pot 1.0 is slow but sweeter than 1.25 four. Smart interior, small boot > **VERDICT:** You'll never benefit from the 7-year warranty and VW's Up is better to drive

## RIO ★★★★★

> Long on space, short on enjoyment, life with a Rio is no carnival. Diesel refinement will have you driving to a favela in the hope of a carjacking > **VERDICT:** White goods car gets the basics right but there are too many better rivals

## CEED HATCH/SW/PROCEED

★★★★★

> Good-looking Korean Golf wannabe is big on equipment and not bad to drive. Ceed is 5dr, Proceed gets 3, and SW is the wagon > **VERDICT:** Entirely credible. Europe's best is still a step ahead, but for how much longer?

## SOUL ★★★★★

> Improved second-gen chunky spunky SUV better to drive but ride and noise suppression poor. Petrol version rubbish, but much cheaper > **VERDICT:** A Korean with character but other SUVs are more rounded (in both senses)

## OPTIMA ★★★★★

> Eye-catching, but dynamically second-rate Mondeo clone much more appealing for last year's new chairs 'n' dampers refresh. Diesel only > **VERDICT:** Nowhere near as bad as its scarcity suggests. Mind you, that would be hard

## VENGA ★★★★★

> Weird sit-up supermini-cum-MPV packs Focus space into near-city-car dimensions. Hard to get comfy though. 1.4 petrol best > **VERDICT:** Too expensive and too ordinary to drive for us to give two hoots. We'll give two stars though

## CARENS ★★★★★

> Big, versatile, value-packed seven-seater. Go diesel - 1.6 petrol is wheezier than emphysema-

riddled asthmatic with a punctured lung.

> **VERDICT:** For all its pseudo-premium Euro aspirations, this is the stuff Kia still does best

## SPORTAGE ★★★★★

> Sharply-styled SUV with pillars so fat it's like driving a zoetrope. Well equipped, but not that roomy, or much fun to drive. Choice of 2- or 4wd > **VERDICT:** Strong on paper, but Qashqai and Mazda CX-5 work harder for your coin

## SORENTO ★★★★★

> Ambitious new flagship SUV reckons it's a real Land Rover rival. Now bigger than ever, and so is the price: up to £40k. 2.2 diesel only engine. > **VERDICT:** Impressive, but lacks the badge and performance of genuine premium off-roaders

## KTM

## X-BOW ★★★★★

> 22nd century Ariel Atom from Austria's barmy motorbike maker mixes carbon construction with hardy Audi turbo'd 2.0 four > **VERDICT:** Big money, big grins, but single-seat BAC Mono gives more racecar-like experience

## LAMBORGHINI

## HURACAN ★★★★★

> Way more accomplished Gallardo successor twinned with new Audi R8. New dual-clutch 'box mandatory. Steer clear of optional 'Dynamic' rack > **VERDICT:** Beats the new 488 for aural excitement, but Ferrari retains its edge when it comes to everything else

## AVENTADOR/SV ★★★★★

> The F12 may be better in every respect, but this is what a supercar should look like. Limited run Aventador SV closes that gap with shocking power and agility > **VERDICT:** SV is the one to have. Sub-7min 'Ring lap makes the hybrid hypercar crew look stupidly expensive

## LAND ROVER

## DEFENDER ★★★★★

> Like Churchill's second term as prime minister, 60-year-old workhorse is anachronistic and out of touch, yet tolerated out of sentiment > **VERDICT:** Roast beef. Concorde. Arkwright's Mill. Six wives. Rain. Defender. Dies this year

## DISCOVERY SPORT ★★★★★

> Educated, professional luxury SUV with seven seats replaces badger-baiting, cousin-marrying Freelander. Just one ageing diesel though, in desperate need of Ingenium lump later this year > **VERDICT:** A bit bland by recent LR standards

## DISCOVERY ★★★★★

> Middle England metal edifice brilliantly capable at driving over lefty hunt saboteurs, mud and street furniture. Only one diesel > **VERDICT:** Perfectly balances picnicking luxury, farming legwork and small-c conservatism

## RANGE ROVER EVOQUE ★★★★★

> The definitive posh mums' SUV. Expensive price offset by superb RVs although wedgy styling means interior space of a half-squeezed toothpaste tube > **VERDICT:** No car has been more perfectly pitched at its intended audience

## RANGE ROVER SPORT ★★★★★

> As luxurious as a Rangle, as practical as a Disco, better looking than an Evoque and could follow a Defender cross country. Add in impressive handling and ballistic SVR and diesel versions > **VERDICT:** Nobody likes a show-off

## RANGE ROVER ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > A benchmark in luxury SUVs. V6 diesel perfectly acceptable, supercharged V8 petrol hilarious > **VERDICT:** The perfect car for smuggling cash to Switzerland, skiing, turning up at a ball, game shooting and being smug

## LEXUS

## CT ★★★★★

**STEER CLEAR** > Pig-ugly premium Prius a bizarre mix of decent handling, woeful performance and a ride so poor it makes a black cab feel like an S-class > **VERDICT:** Rubbish. Wouldn't merit a single sale if company car tax bills were less CO2-focused

## IS ★★★★★

> Sharp-suited, well-specced 3-series rival finally gets decent rear space. Good chassis, but 250 V6 irrelevant, and frugal hybrid hobbled by nasty CVT > **VERDICT:** So close. Give this a proper auto 'box and it would be right up there

## GS ★★★★★

> GS makes twin-pronged hybrid-only attack on German territory. 450h quicker and handles; 300h is the one to buy (with your company's money) > **VERDICT:** 300 makes company car sense, but don't expect to take the B-roads home

## LS ★★★★★

> Monstrously expensive but so refined it makes a library feel like a sound-off competition (which the Mark Levinson hi-fi could probably win) > **VERDICT:** Built for those in the back, but the S-class makes every seat worth buying a ticket for

## NX ★★★★★

> Trumps Audi Q5 with a fabulous interior and arrest-me (for persecuting curves) exterior design. Fwd or 4wd with electric motor at rear > **VERDICT:** Doesn't work as a driver's car, so take the NX300h hybrid over faster, costlier NX200t

## RX ★★★★★

**REPLACED SOON** > Genteel giant Jeep powered by hybridised V6. Loves motorways but steering's so remote it lives in a shepherd's cottage in the Hebrides > **VERDICT:** A CO2 champ and tax beater, but rival diesel SUVs are the real fuel sippers

## RC/RC-F ★★★★★

> V8 IS-F successor has all the right raw ingredients, but the chef fried them up with too much lard. And with no diesel or hybrid, regular RC is a bit player > **VERDICT:** Interesting 4/M4 alternative but five years late for the party

## LOTUS

## ELISE ★★★★★

> Reminds just how connected cars used to be. Slothful base 1.6 reminds how they used to go, too, so pick 1.8. Alfa 4C is a pricey, pale imitation > **VERDICT:** Still sensational, but a 10-year old example does the same job for half the price

## EXIGE ★★★★★

> Gym-bunny Elise with supercharged V6, but the same beautifully connected unassisted steering. Stripped Cup version is Hethel's GT3 R5 > **VERDICT:** The best Lotus, but Cayman GT5 and new GT4 match it every step

## EVORA ★★★★★

**FACELIFT SOON** > Ignored in Danny Brouhaha's five-car fantasy plan, now getting some Lotus love including more power, better interior and easier access > **VERDICT:** Would've got away with it if it wasn't for those meddling kids and that cheaper Cayman

## McLAREN

## 650S ★★★★★

> Original 12C showed real promise, 650S delivers on it. Is there a car with better steering than this? 675LT is McLaren's 458 Speciale > **VERDICT:** If this thing looked like a P1 (rather than just cribbing its eyes) it would be invincible

## P1 ★★★★★

> £1m hybrid hypercar with aero straight from McLaren's F1 brains. All sold, and if you haven't got one you can't have track-only GTR either > **VERDICT:** Astounding, but LaFerrari feels more special (as it should for £400k more)

## MASERATI

## GHIBLI ★★★★★

> A Maserati for the price of a 5-series! A bad-riding one with a disappointing interior, but still, a Maserati! Stingy Italians charge extra for paddles > **VERDICT:** The best badge on your company car list, but not the best car

## QUATTROPORTE ★★★★★

> Supersaloon-cum-limo can't decide what it wants to be. Looks great, handles better, rides worse. Twin-turbo V8 rapid; diesel a stopgap > **VERDICT:** Buy it to stretch its legs, not because you want to kick back and stretch your own

## GRAN TURISMO COUPE/ROADSTER ★★★★★

> Four genuine seats a rarity in this class, but fill them and you'll regret choosing the weedy 4.2 over the 4.7 at the first sniff of a hill > **VERDICT:** Podgy, pretty, practical GT for folk who hate four-door faux coupes. And luggage

## GT MC STRADALE ★★★★★

> Defies hulking 1770kg mass (and that's after a 110kg diet) and modest 444bhp to deliver an engaging driving experience. Epic noise > **VERDICT:** Massively underrated. A GT3 for an Italian lothario with a 'Ring season pass

## MAZDA

## 2 ★★★★★

> Shot-in-the-arm supermini packs value, handling and looks, leaving sweatmarks on the shirts of VW Polo marketing team. Still a bit Poundland inside > **VERDICT:** Under-radar Fiesta threatener gatecrashes the top table

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**3 HATCH/SALOON/ESTATE**

★★★★★

> Another left-field, right-on Mazda that's great to stonking value. Handles tidily but ride and refinement could be better. Pick base fwd diesel > **VERDICT:** Don't buy a family hatch until you've tried one. Oh, a Golf? Apart from that

★★★★★

> Ancient off-the-pace MPV that looks like its been side-swiped by a kamikaze dispatch rider. Roomy and reasonable to drive, but just not! > **VERDICT:** Large 'n' loaded but there're too many fresher rivals to warrant wasting your wedge

**6 SALOON/TOURER**

★★★★★

> Boss won't let you have a 3-series? Double your digit and try this impressive alternative. Handles well but rides like the tyres have DTs > **VERDICT:** Swoopily styled, tax friendly, entertaining alternative to po-faced Passat

**CX-5**

★★★★★

> Crisply styled, commodious crossover is stonking value. Handles tidily but ride and refinement could be better. Pick base fwd diesel > **VERDICT:** MX-5 aside, this is the best thing to come out of Mazda for years

**MX-5**

★★★★★

> Smaller than the '89 original, and in real terms, almost half the price. 1.5 sweet but slow; 155bhp 2.0 we've yet to drive could well earn that fifth star > **VERDICT:** Brilliantly uncomplicated budget sports car. Dink the GTi for this

**MERCEDES****A-CLASS**

★★★★★

> Cool in the manner of a skinny, 20-a-day fashionista – the body is writing cheques its heart can't cash. Expensive, cramped and brittle to drive > **VERDICT:** Don't be swayed by the looks, A3 and 1-series do the job better

**A45 AMG**

★★★★★

> Madly turbocharged four-pot with 355bhp and four-wheel drive. Goes like a banker who knows the game is up; almost as expensive > **VERDICT:** Resets the bar for super hot hatches. Doesn't mean it's the one to have

**B-CLASS**

★★★★★

> Posh MPV big brother to the A-class misses out on the looks and the charisma, but is far more homely and just as technically savvy > **VERDICT:** So boring the BMW 2-series Active Tourer actually begins to make sense

**CLA SALOON/SHOOTING BRAKE**

★★★★★

> CLS clone based on the A-class, now including the Shooting Brake swoopy estate. Lacks gravitas of the former and sex appeal of the latter > **VERDICT:** Just because you can make something smaller doesn't mean you should

**C-CLASS SALOON/ESTATE**

★★★★★

> Latest C impresses with mini S-class looks and almost all the same on-board tech. Denies muttering it wishes the 3-series would drop dead > **VERDICT:** BMW still better to drive, but if you want a relaxing techno cocoon, this is it

**C-CLASS COUPE**

★★★★★

> Currently still a hangover from the previous generation C-class. And no matter how good the party, a hangover is still a hangover > **VERDICT:** Wait for the new version, due later in 2015

**C63 AMG**

★★★★★

> New C63 ditched the old 6.2 V8 for the new twin-turbo 4.0 from the AMG GT. Four-door only; M3 last seen looking for a doctor's note > **VERDICT:** Mega traction and one of the best turbo engines on sale. Gets our vote

**E-CLASS SALOON/ESTATE**

★★★★★

> Large and rather lovely, but overshadowed by the extra added allure of the CLS – unless you really want to look like a German taxi driver > **VERDICT:** The most old-school Merc in the modern range, which has a certain appeal

**E-CLASS COUPE/CONVERTIBLE**

★★★★★

> CLK-replacing Coupe and Convertible are still C-class derived – and old C-class at that – despite the name. Both seat four in decent comfort > **VERDICT:** Restrained and tasteful approach to mid-size luxury. Feeling their age

**E63 AMG**

★★★★★

> 5.5-litre V8 twin-turbo with up to 577bhp and rear-wheel-drive only in the UK. Like a BMW M5, but without the artificial enhancement > **VERDICT:** Bit of a blunt instrument. Spectacular soundtrack means you won't care

**CLS/SHOOTING BRAKE**

★★★★★

> The word 'coupaloon' is banned from these pages. Which is fine, because we're all slightly in love with the glamorous Shooting Brake > **VERDICT:** Second-gen version of the original four-door coupe continues to lead the pack

**S-CLASS**

★★★★★

> Enormously technically accomplished, with camera-guided ride quality and stacks of safety kit. Maybach and Pullman variants immensely flash > **VERDICT:** Makes 7-series/A8 seem like toys. Captains of industry should insist on it

**S-CLASS COUPE**

★★★★★

> 5m-long two-door with stunning interior and optional suspension that leans into bends like a motorbike. Barking mad indulgence > **VERDICT:** Buy it as a tribute to your own personal wealth. Don't expect to get let out at junctions

**S63/S65 AMG**

★★★★★

> Twin-turbo 577bhp V8 and 621bhp V12 S-class variants, because being richer than the world isn't enough and you need to out-drag it, too > **VERDICT:** S63 V8 is bonkers, S65 V12 utterly certifiable. Does your chauffeur deserve it?

**GLA**

★★★★★

> Confused A-class on stilts with lifestyle pretensions and unnecessary surplus of interior air vents. GLA45 AMG simply unnecessary > **VERDICT:** An A-class for the mobility challenged. Or those prone to hot flushes

**G-CLASS**

★★★★★

> Cold War relic that's so solidly built it could ram raid a bank vault. Obscene special editions a growing – literally – Mercedes obsession > **VERDICT:** You shouldn't want one, but... Will outlast any Defender. And possibly the planet

**M-CLASS**

★★★★★

> May have been the original luxury 'on-roader' but current one is nothing more than an also-ran after the X5, Cayenne and Range Rover Sport > **VERDICT:** Perfectly adequate – which means it's now largely out-classed

**GL-CLASS**

★★★★★

> Massive seven-seater SUV makes the Audi Q7 look demure. Actually off-road capable. Lacks super-lux appeal of latest Range Rover > **VERDICT:** Americans love 'em. Make of that what you will...

**SLK**

★★★★★

> Small, folding hardtop 'sports car', engines range from a clatterer diesel to a non-turbo V8 with cylinder deactivation. Neither of which particularly appeals > **VERDICT:** Boxster so much better even your hairdresser could tell

**SL**

★★★★★

> Large, folding hardtop 'sports car'. No diesel option, but you can have a twin-turbo V12. Ferrari California T now stealing its lunch money > **VERDICT:** Fine for cruising that boulevard. If it wasn't for the aforementioned Ferrari

**AMG GT**

★★★★★

> SLS replacement is smaller (just), cheaper (considerably) and blessed with a 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 that will blow your mind > **VERDICT:** It's got the muscle but maybe not the finesse; 911 buyers should still think twice

**MG**

★★★★★

> Tough-looking, spacious supermini has handling that lives up to the promise of that badge. As does the woeful build, crap engine and concrete ride > **VERDICT:** The Chinese are coming! But so far they've only got to Tajikistan

**MG6**

★★★★★

> Looks like a '90s Avensis, and terrible refinement, build quality and ropey steering means the rest of it is stuck in the same decade > **VERDICT:** The worst car on sale today? Pre-registered Skoda Octavia kicks it black 'n' blue

**MINI****HATCH 3DR/5DR**

★★★★★

> Bigger and gawki and less charming, but lovely BMW engines are smooth and peppy, while ride has improved without ruining handling. Five-door in danger of being practical > **VERDICT:** A better ownership proposition than ever, even if you love it a little less

**COOPER S/JCW**

★★★★★

> Up-sized BMW 2.0-litre four-pot-powered 228bhp JCW most powerful Mini ever. Terrific turboed fun, if a tad overwrought and synthetic > **VERDICT:** Beware the options list, lest it lead to bullion robberies and perilous dangling over cliffs

**CLUBMAN/COUPE/CONVERTIBLE**

★★★★★

> A Mini with a toupe, the Coupe is just loopy. Convertible makes more sense but time running out for last-gen models before the next flight of fancy occurs > **VERDICT:** Coupe doesn't add much driving character over standard Mini

**COUNTRYMAN/PACEMAN**

★★★★★

> Bigger Minis for people who don't want slightly smaller (but still quite big) Minis. Paceman even has fewer doors for those phobic of apertures. Niche > **VERDICT:** Please, please make it stop. It's all just so wrong

**MITSUBISHI****MIRAGE**

★★★★★

> Looking for the ideal car to crash into a shopfront when staging a 'Look at this OAP selecting reverse rather than first!' YouTube sensation? This is it > **VERDICT:** Slow, rough, harsh, bad. Sadly it's not a mirage, it's real

**ASX**

★★★★★

> Forgotten among the slew of small SUVs, the ASX is rather good now, with decent ride and sharper looks. Selectable 2/4wd is handy, but engine is rattly and gearbox slushy > **VERDICT:** More workmanlike than many, and better for it

**SHOGUN**

★★★★★

> Great value old-school workhorse for those whose workplace is covered in mud, oil or bomb craters. Big, noisy diesel, chunky underpinnings and reliable, with hose-down cabin > **VERDICT:** If you don't need this car, you don't need this car

**OUTLANDER**

★★★★★

> Workmanlike cabin and infotainment invented when Steve Jobs was in nappies. But the PHEV is a plug-in ahead of the game, offering 30 electric miles > **VERDICT:** The biggest-selling EV on the market shows underdogs can bite back

**MORGAN****3-WHEELER**

★★★★★

> Comfortable as riding over Niagara Falls in a barrel and equally sane. Not as quick as it feels, but quick enough for a three-wheeler on bike tyres > **VERDICT:** Brilliant Caterham alternative without the macho trackday posturing

**AERO**

★★★★★

> Drop-top was first of the new-era Morgans and goes it alone since Aero Supersports, Coupe and Squiffy Perkins bought it at the Somme > **VERDICT:** Two worlds collide. And with 367bhp they may not be the only ones doing the colliding

**PLUS 4/FOUR FOUR/ROADSTER**

★★★★★

> Entry-level Mog still with 'traditional' ash frame and 'traditional' (ie, awful) dynamics. Four-seat 4/4 is surprise eco champ: 44mpg > **VERDICT:** Cheap, considering the craftsmanship, even at £33k, but if you want an old car, buy one!

**PLUS 8**

★★★★★

> Don't be fooled by tatty-ho styling, 8 is built on 'modern' bonded and riveted Aero chassis. Fidgety like a child with worms > **VERDICT:**

Classic Morgan style, modern BMW V8 poke, manners like a five-term Borstal veteran

**NISSAN****MICRA**

★★★★★

> As alluring as a dentist's waiting room, and just as noisy – modern Micra is a shadow of its former self and unworthy of your interest > **VERDICT:** Judge this book by its cover: it's dull to drive and just as cheap inside

**JUKE**

★★★★★

> Mould-breaking compact crossover; you think it would look like that if the mould hadn't broken? Cheap interior and so-so dynamics belie the hype > **VERDICT:** Does it still count as 'different' if everybody's got one?

**NOTE**

★★★★★

> Like a Honda Jazz with middle-age spread, this is a small, practical MPV-hatch with limited aspirations of greatness > **VERDICT:** An automotive cardigan: deeply uncool but good at what it does

**LEAF**

★★★★★

> Gawky looking purpose-built electric car proves that life after the internal combustion engine won't be that bad. Gets better with every revision > **VERDICT:** Worth at least a cursory glance on your way to the BMW i3 showroom

**PULSAR**

★★★★★

> So dull it can only be explained by a conspiracy theory claiming it owes its entire existence to a long-range Qashqai sales-boost strategy > **VERDICT:** Buy a Focus. Or a Golf. Or a Ceed. Or an Auris. Okay, maybe not an Auris...

**QASHQAI**

★★★★★

> Second-gen crossover carries on exactly where the original left off: meandering ominously in the middle lane to the tune of 'are we there yet?' > **VERDICT:** Likeable, with a side order of resting on its own laurels

**X-TRAIL**

★★★★★

> The X-Trail used to be a rough-tough off-roader apparently designed on an Etch-a-Sketch. Now it's a Qashqai put through a photocopyier at +10% > **VERDICT:** It still ain't exciting. But it's probably going to sell a lot better

**GT-R**

★★★★★

> A monster in every respect, from the way goes to the amount it weighs. 4wd system practically sentient, and it gets faster every year > **VERDICT:** No longer the supercar of the PlayStation Generation, now simply a supercar

**PAGANI****HYUARA**

★★★★★

> Spectacular cottage (villetta?) industry supercar with active aero, AMG-built 720bhp twin-turbo V12 and an interior more decadent than a Roman orgy > **VERDICT:** Want have, can't have: they're all sold. But a roadster is rumoured

**PEUGEOT****ION**

★★★★★

> Rebadged Mitsubishi iMiev seats four, and just as well: with leasing bills at £400/month you'll need passengers to chip in > **VERDICT:** Congestion-charge, road-tax and petrol-bill exempt. Zero-rated for driving pleasure too

**108**

★★★★★

> Pug-faced city car. Go for 82bhp 1.2: the 68bhp 1.0 is so slow we were all monkeys when it set off and it still hasn't hit 60mph > **VERDICT:** Reasonable no-frills city car but boot and rear space tight. Skoda Citigo is better

**208**

★★★★★

> Unlike old Peugeots, the quality engineering's all in the cabin, not under the skin. Hateful ergonomics shaped by Picasso in his cubist period > **VERDICT:** Plenty of showroom appeal, less on the test drive. Boring Polo creams it

**308 HATCH/SW ESTATE**

★★★★★

> Handsome, hushed 308 at its best when eating motorway miles, or when you're watching it out of the window of your Golf. Fiddly



# THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY.

touchscreen > **VERDICT:** Hatch isn't up to scratch, but roomier SW wagon is worth a look

## 508 SALOON/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Little-seen XL Pug with unconvincing cod German accent. HYbrid4 gets 4wd via 37bhp 'leccy motor on rear wheels' > **VERDICT:** RXH is poor-man's Audi Allroad. Rest of range is padding on your company car list

## PARTNER TEPEE ★★★★★

**FACELIFT SOON** > Spacious, versatile Tepee so useful it could almost be a van. Funny, that. Slothful, spartan, but drives okay and 'real' MPVs can't match practicality > **VERDICT:** Make your own clothes? Live in a Yurt? This is the car for you

## 2008 ★★★★★

> Welly-wearing 208 is front-drive only, though 'Grip Control' ESP divides torque left to right. Quality cabin, big boot, but Renault Captur prettier > **VERDICT:** Strong, but it's late to the party and wearing a frock made out of coal sacks

## 3008 ★★★★★

> Get Pininfarina on the phone, this is a code red emergency! Revolving styling totally undermines this roomy and entirely reasonable crossover > **VERDICT:** Hard to work up much of a trouser tent when the Qashqai looks so much sexier

## 5008 ★★★★★

> Woah! Do they still make that?! Who'd have thought? Stacks of space and at a decent price, but an S-Max is a vastly more satisfying steer > **VERDICT:** Sound medium-MPV choice – if you live 34,678 miles from your nearest Ford dealer

## RCZ ★★★★★

> Rough-riding coupe gets a rough ride at the hands of Audi's infinitely more polished TT. Decent handling, messy cabin, useless back seats > **VERDICT:** There are better coupes, but if the styling suckers you, get a brisk RCZ 200

## RCZ R ★★★★★

> Sweet bespoke chassis, Torsen LSD and mega 266bhp 1.6 that's both quick and capable of topping 40mpg. But £32k for a Peugeot... > **VERDICT:** RCZ R says Peugeot still knows how to make a great car. They should do it more often

## PORSCHE

## BOXSTER ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Sublime. Base 2.7 costs less than £40k but unless you like sitting on milk crates and being outdragged by hot hatches, go for the 3.4S > **VERDICT:** Cheaper and more versatile than a Cayman, this is surely Porsche's best sports car

## CAYMAN ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Tin-top Boxster with the same twin-boot practicality, more power and even sharper handling. Makes F-type look podgy and pricey > **VERDICT:** The definitive 24/7 coupe. Badge snobbery only reason to spend £20k more on 911

## CAYMAN GT4 ★★★★★

> Junior GT3 is first Cayman to get more power than current 911. 380bhp, manual 'box, LSD and a grin wider than a Glasgow smile > **VERDICT:** Porsche finally admits that the Cayman and not the halo 911 is its real sports coupe

## 911 ★★★★★

**FACELIFT SOON** > Wears a cravat these days (leaves the ripped jeans to the Cayman). Base 3.4 needs working: GTS wants to. Reborn Targa coolest of the lot > **VERDICT:** Still pushes the buttons, and still the only proper sports car to carry the kids too

## 911 GT3/GT3 RS ★★★★★

> New engines, PDK-only tranny, electric steering and rear steering too for this generation. Epic drive, but aero-heavy RS may be a touch too hardcore > **VERDICT:** Half the price of a 'proper' supercar, but every bit as good, and then some

## 918 ★★★★★

> Epic 4wd hybrid can waste GTis with 6sec 0-62mph electric mode, then slay Lambos by adding 600bhp V8. Superb electric steering, too > **VERDICT:** Almost overshadowed in the P1-LaFerrari posturing war, but easily as good

## MACAN ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Baby Cayenne is even better than dad – and Evoque. Base car with Golf GTI 2.0 makes no sense when S and S Diesel are pennies more > **VERDICT:** GT3 RS for trackdays, Cayman GT4 for weekends, this for everything else. Sorted

## CAYENNE ★★★★★

> Porsche's cash-cow is a prize German Angus these days, handsome and the best SUV to drive. Turbo V6 S quick, too quiet; Diesel S dynamite > **VERDICT:** Not convinced it's a proper Porker? Turbo S laps the 'Ring in sub-8min

## PANAMERA ★★★★★

> Super-sized supersaloon hamstrung by looking like a prom-night 911 stretch limo. Great interior but more buttons than a giant's carigan > **VERDICT:** Expensive, but no other luxury car drives this well. Turbo a powerhouse, GTS purer

## PROTON

## SAVVY ★★★★★

> Oddball city car with refinement of a funfair generator, cramped cabin and sub-Chinese plastics. 50mpg sounds okay, but rivals do 70 > **VERDICT:** Proton's best car easily merits its one-and-a-half-star rating. Oh, we don't do half stars

## SATRIA NEO ★★★★★

> Lotus-tweaked chassis okay, rest makes Ingmar Bergman's catalogue look like a rom-com box set. Screen rake means pinhead room only > **VERDICT:** 'The ultimate hot hatchback,' Proton claims. They missed a word out

STEER CLEAR

## GEN-2 ★★★★★

> Risible, unrefined Focus-sized hatch with a steering wheel mounted so inexplicably low driving feels like performing a kettle bell exercise routine > **VERDICT:** If you buy one, leave your brain to science. We need to know

## RADICAL

## SR3 SL ★★★★★

> Properly type-approved (street legal) SR3 gets a 300bhp blown Ford 2.0 instead of a bike motor, a heater and even a 12v socket. It's almost lavish! > **VERDICT:** Toned down for occasional road use but still hairier than a cave man with hypertrichosis

## RXC TURBO ★★★★★

> Play out those Le Mans fantasies on the commute with this Peterborough-built Polarix. Sequential 'box welcome in town like an EDL demo > **VERDICT:** When you've outgrown your Caterhams and 911 GT3s, here's the answer

## RENAULT

## TWIZY ★★★★★

> Part electric scooter, part social experiment, it's easy to love the doorless Twizy, especially on balmy evenings along La Croisette. Grimy days in Doncaster a tougher ask > **VERDICT:** Transportation of the future, if it's never wet in the future and you like chatting at traffic lights

## ZOE ★★★★★

> Delightful little EV, now with increased range and cabin like a spa waiting room. Overall purchase now offered alongside confusing battery leasing option > **VERDICT:** Zen-like calmness replaces nagging range anxiety

## TWINGO ★★★★★

> Rear-engined rwd runabout isn't as nippy as it sounds, but is roomy, with clever smartphone connectivity. More cheeky than sister Smart, and cheaper > **VERDICT:** Lower-power version with '80s F1 Turbo paintjob the way to go

## CLIO ★★★★★

> Welcome return to form for the five-door Clio with even boggo ones looking handsome, a well sorted cabin and sprightly driving qualities. Three-cylinder turbo petrol a (slowish) hoot > **VERDICT:** Fiesta more fun, Clio more stylish

## CLIO RS ★★★★★

> Everything you expect from an RS: fab ride quality, sharp looks, superb handling. Did we mention the naff twin-clutch 'box or cheaper Fiesta ST? Oh, bigger > **VERDICT:** Like Harry H Corbett, a potential great typecast by one part

## CAPTUR ★★★★★

> It's a Clio on stilts – but that's not necessarily a bad thing. No 4x4 pretensions means focus is on personalisation. Good engines. No Juke

to drive > **VERDICT:** Technicolour clown car if you're not careful with the spec, otherwise okay

## MEGANE HATCH/TOURER/CABRIO ★★★★★

**REPLACED SOON** > Despite a facelift, Megane is creaking like an octogenarian's hips. Sport Tourer offers photocopier repairman practicality, Coupe-Cabriolet is Bournemouth retirement fodder > **VERDICT:** 'Drive the Change' is Renault's slogan. Could do with driving it faster

## MEGANE RS ★★★★★

> RS 265 turns average stock into hot-hatch genius, with stripped cabin, manual 'box and raucous 2.0 Turbo. Spartan, more powerful Trophy-R is bonkers > **VERDICT:** What happens when RenaultSport, not marketers, build cars

## GRAND SCENIC ★★★★★

**REPLACED SOON** > Contraception failed, shotgun marriage, working harder to pay for it, old friends don't come round any more, debt, and a Grand Scenic > **VERDICT:** Tired, lacking spark, plodding through each day. And that's just the car...

## KADJAR ★★★★★

**NEW ENTRY** > Did Nissan leave the Qashqai parts bin store 'Kadjar', or did Alliance partners Renault break in like crossover copycat ninjas? Either way, this is the outcome > **VERDICT:** And actually, it's not a bad one. Good looking, smooth riding, but disappointing interior plastics

## ROLLS-ROYCE

## GHOST ★★★★★

> A little posher, with more bespoke options to hide BMW-ness, new gearbox for the V12 and minor fettling to the metal. > **VERDICT:** Perfectly built and pitched and more individual. A Phantom for millionaires not billionaires

## WRAITH ★★★★★

> A 624bhp twin-turbo V12 sporting vehicle that drives like no other. Dismisses distance but would never lower itself to squeal through bends > **VERDICT:** Whisper it, but Rolls has produced an amazing driver's car

## PHANTOM ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Simply the best luxury car money can buy, with a cabin to embarrass a superyacht, opulence to make Donatella Versace blush (if she could), and a turbo V12 pulling you along. Not that you'll hear it > **VERDICT:** Every car on earth starts with ambitions of being a Phantom

## SEAT

## MII ★★★★★

> Tedious-looking city-box is far less funky than Renault's Twingo but roomier and good to drive. You don't look at the mantelpiece, and all that > **VERDICT:** VW Up more desirable, pretty Skoda Citigo cheaper. Siesta time in Seat's prod dept?

# LEASE ACADEMY: COMPACT CROSOVERS

Every month we trawl the leasing brokers to find the hottest deals. Think before you buy!

## Fiat 500X Pop Star 1.4 MultiAir £214pm

Pumped-up Fiat 500 in Not Rubbish shock, petrol best-seller and plenty of standard kit

**Spec:** 1.4 petrol, fwd, 6spd manual, 138bhp, 47.1mpg, 139g/km  
**List price:** £16,961  
**£214/month for 48 months**  
**Initial payment:** £1280  
**Mileage allowance:** 10,000/year  
**Via:** FleetPrices.co.uk



## Nissan Qashqai 1.6 dCi N-Tec+ £250pm

The UK's favourite crossover – and at £250 a month for a great diesel with sat-nav it's no surprise

**Spec:** 1.6 diesel, fwd, 6spd manual, 128bhp, 61.4mpg, 120g/km  
**List price:** £25,530  
**£250/month for 48 months**  
**Initial payment:** £1496  
**Mileage allowance:** 10,000/year  
**Via:** FleetPrices.co.uk



## Ford Kuga 2.0 TDCi 180 Titanium X Sport £298pm

Interior is dated but top-spec Kuga is a delight to drive, and offers four-wheel drive for under £300

**Spec:** 2.0 diesel, 4wd, 6spd manual, 178bhp, 54.3mpg, 135g/km  
**List price:** £32,045  
**£298/month for 48 months**  
**Initial payment:** £1782  
**Mileage allowance:** 10,000/year  
**Via:** CortVehicleContracts.co.uk



## Audi Q5 2.0 TDI Quattro S line £391pm

Great handling and one of CAR's favourite compact SUVs; dual-clutch auto £20/month more

**Spec:** 2.0 diesel, 4wd, 6spd manual, 187bhp, 49.6mpg, 151g/km  
**List price:** £35,130  
**£391/month for 48 months**  
**Initial payment:** £2345  
**Mileage allowance:** 10,000/year  
**Via:** NewCarDeals.ltd.uk





## IBIZA HATCH/SC/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Angular, angry-looking supermini, possibly because it knows how much better a Fiesta is to drive. It's not bad though, and ST wagon is huge  
> **VERDICT:** Not as sporty as it likes to think, but holding up in face of newer, better-driving rivals

## IBIZA CUPRA ★★★★★

> Bags more attitude than Polo GTI, and 180bhp turbo'd, supercharged 1.4 means it's not short of pace and hates fuel stops. DSG only, sadly  
> **VERDICT:** Fast and feisty junior hot hatch, but outdriven by key rivals. Make ours a Fiesta ST

## TOLEDO ★★★★★

**STEER CLEAR** > OAP special whose sole interesting feature is that while it looks like a boring saloon, it's actually a boring hatch! Massive interior > **VERDICT:** This and identical Skoda Rapid duke it out for UK's duller car. Czech please!

## LEON HATCH/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Bigger third-gen Leon gets the same MQB platform as Golf and A3, but only 150+bhp cars get multi-link rear. Ride and cabin plastics brittle  
> **VERDICT:** Sound, value-focused in-house Golf rival. ST wagon with 1.4TSI gets our cash

## LEON CUPRA ★★★★★

> Stupidly rapid 280's mid-range pull makes Golf GTI sister look like a tickled up 1.2. Front-drive, so expect 300 miles from a set of fronts  
> **VERDICT:** Huge amount of hot hatch for the cash – or hot wagon, in case of stylish Cupra ST

## ALTEA ★★★★★

> Remember when all Seats had grilles like merkins? The genital garnish is alive and well in this old MPV. Longer XL's boot is a third bigger  
> **VERDICT:** Handles okay but the cheap plastic interior has all the ambience of a township hut

## ALHAMBRA ★★★★★

**FACELIFT SOON** > Seat's biggest box has seven real seats. Such good family wheels even CAR's rear-drive-loving Ben(t out of shape) Barry became an MPV convert > **VERDICT:** Brilliant big bus does everything VW Sharan sister can for less lolly

## SKODA

## CITIGO ★★★★★

> Skoda's all but identical version of the VW Up and Seat Mii. Pick your badge – they're all well packaged but too noisy and slow > **VERDICT:** Cheaper than the Up, but not by much. Hyundai i10 also worth a look. Yes, actual advice!

## FABIA HATCH/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Very mature little supermini with bodywork creases a Corby trouser press would be proud of. Estate version ideal for Jack Russells  
> **VERDICT:** Roomy, well made and unexciting – like a low-rent VW Polo. Which is what it is

## RAPID HATCH/SPACEBACK ★★★★★

**STEER CLEAR** > Long, narrow notchback hatch is automotive equivalent of Eastern Europe refugee. Big boot. Spaceback is shorter, more 'stylish', still dross > **VERDICT:** Unless you've got a lot of potatoes and no other way to carry them, just don't

## OCTAVIA HATCH/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Basically the same as a Golf and A3 underneath, but bigger, cheaper and more functional inside. Hot vRS versions old-school ballistic fun. 4x4s practical > **VERDICT:** It's a lot of car for the money

## SUPERB SALOON/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Ginormous budget limo alternative is packed with value, refinement and comfort, and neat to drive estate 'loads' better to look at. Taxi for CAR! > **VERDICT:** There's a new one inbound, but don't be put off the old one if the deal is right

## ROOMSTER ★★★★★

> Hipster lifestyle accessory without the hip. Which is no surprise as it's getting on a bit now. Flexible seating – loads of room for people and kit > **VERDICT:** Modern equivalent of a Fiat Multipla: ugly but useful. We'd call it Igor

## YETI ★★★★★

**BEST IN CLASS** > Ikea wardrobe on wheels – so practical you'll wonder how you ever lived without it. Good news is you don't have to assemble it yourself > **VERDICT:** Bigger engines are better. Choose the Outdoor version for that rugged look. Grrr

## SMART

## FORTWO ★★★★★

> Chunkier new ForTwo has middle-age spread compared to the last one. Wider, with a much better ride, higher quality cabin and slicker auto, it is older, but wiser > **VERDICT:** Less of a compromise, and still a brilliant city runabout

## FORFOUR ★★★★★

> Renault/Merc tie-up means ForFour is accomplished with a classy cabin, although ludicrous pricing seem at odds with budget city car buyers > **VERDICT:** Sister car Twingo is more than two grand cheaper. Work that out

## SSANGYONG

## KORANDO ★★★★★

> Borderline rubbish to drive but more practical than the Teflon-coated trousers you're probably wearing if you're giving it serious consideration > **VERDICT:** Huge, handy and hellish value, but we'd have a pre-reg Qashqai or CX-5 any day

## REXTON W ★★★★★

> Like that weird 1960s Izal bog roll, Rexton kind of does the job, but is hard and shiny to the touch and not that nice to use. Deals better with mud > **VERDICT:** Plenty of space, but dynamically, like Izal, it's gone down the pan

## TURISMO ★★★★★

> Marginally less odious than the old Rodius, but every bit as practical, this giant 7-seater is slower than the Crossrail boring machine > **VERDICT:** Has mini-cab written all over it, or soon will, which will handily help disguise the ugliness

## SUBARU

## IMPREZA ★★★★★

> Yes, it still exists beyond WRX and STi. No, you don't want one. Boggo Impreza reduced to a 1.6 petrol hatchback only with optional CVT. Shudder > **VERDICT:** Have you got a brand new combine harvester? It's probably a better drive

## WRX/STi ★★★★★

> Sorry WRX, I'm breaking up with you. It's not you, it's me. No, it is you, it's definitely you and your crashy ride, nasty dash and inflexible engine > **VERDICT:** Brilliant, on its day, in its day. But that was yesterday, so let's call it a day

## XV ★★★★★

> Hopelessly expensive half-way SUV half-wit. Suspension thumps so intrusive you'll think the Stomp musical is performing in the wheelarches > **VERDICT:** In the tough crossover market Subaru makes up the numbers, and the price

## FORESTER ★★★★★

> Appealingly functional square-rigger the kind of crossover that existed before we had 'lifestyles'. Good on road, great off it, but not cheap > **VERDICT:** Old-school Subaru honest, charming. Tweed cap, pipe, sheep flock optional

## OUTBACK ★★★★★

> The unloved Legacy's only UK legacy is this Allroad-style crossover. New for spring 2015, it's huge inside and the 4x4 look isn't all for show > **VERDICT:** Still more niche than a cragside crevice. Dependable, not desirable

## BRZ ★★★★★

> Gloriously simple but under-nourished rear-drive Boxer coupe, crying out for Lichfield Imports' 280bhp supercharger kit. GT86 twin is £500 more > **VERDICT:** Loveable car we wanted them to make but you don't want to buy

## SUZUKI

## ALTO ★★★★★

**STEER CLEAR** > Being positive, it has massive headlights, tight turning circle and is cheap. But noisy three-pot engine has the pull of a Christmas cracker and cabin looks like a GCSE project > **VERDICT:** Living in a city you can walk or cycle. So do that

## CELERIO ★★★★★

> Braking-phobic city car otherwise spacious, full of kit and cheap. Three-cylinder petrol only plus all the handling vim of a B&Q Value

## Spec Expert

## EQUIP THE PERFECT FORD S-MAX

Thinking of buying Ford's spangly S-Max? On the left our minimum spec, on the right the dream ticket

## ALL YOU NEED SPEC

New S-Max comes loaded with high-tech kit right from entry-level Zetec. All-round parking sensors, SYNC 2 smartphone integration, DAB radio, dual-zone climate and keyless go and EasyFold seats all standard.

Starting price: £24,545



Basic 1.5-litre EcoBoost turbo petrol is good, but if you've got family awaydays in mind you'll be better off with a diesel. The 148bhp version of the 2.0 TDCi is most popular (40%), and just £750 more than the 118bhp diesel.

Diesel power: £25,995

According to Ford, 85% of previous S-Max buyers chose Titanium spec – and although it's an extra £1700, it's now even more compelling.

Extra kit includes sat-nav, auto lights and wipers, and bigger central touchscreen.

Safety also gets a boost, with lane-keep assist, traffic sign recognition and Ford's 'Intelligent Speed Limiter'. It's an extra £400 for Active City Stop, though...

Go Titanium: £27,695

## ALL YOU WANT SPEC

Best paint choice? £250 Frozen White. Traditionally blacks and silvers have been popular, but at £545 they seem unnecessarily indulgent. As does the champagne gold 'Metallicous'.

The Frozen price: £27,945

Awd is available, but save the £1500 and buy winter tyres. Dodge the £600 power operated steering wheel adjustment – if you're buying an S-Max you're not that close to the grave. £750 to upgrade to 177bhp, though? Sure, especially with no extra CO2.

More muscle: £28,695

Keep your teeth and the standard 17in wheels. But the £400 Titanium Family Pack adds useful cargo nets, rear tray tables, power third-row seats and a 220v socket.

Family time: £29,095



Prepared to crack £30k? Go for the Titanium X Pack. This adds adaptive all-LED headlights and leather seats. Not cheap at £2200, but you'll get some of it back come resale time.



TOTAL PRICE: £31,295



wheelbarrow > **VERDICT:** Dowdy and rowdy. Be glad you've got DAB and a cupholder

## SWIFT ★★★★★

> An unsung hero, and not just the excellent 136bhp Sport. Handles well, spacious and cheap. 1.2 petrol soon to be replaced by Dualjet motor > **VERDICT:** Buy one and challenge anyone who questions your choice to a fistfight

## SX4 S-CROSS ★★★★★

> The cheap way to clone a Qashqai. Won't score any points for style, in fact you might hide it at the back of the school car park. Diesel is the best bet – you'll have to stop and get out less > **VERDICT:** A crossover to be cross over

## JIMNY ★★★★★

> A box with a four-wheel-drive system bolted onto the bottom, and a 1.3-petrol engine hanging out front. There are seats too > **VERDICT:** The swamps the Jimny can easily drive over were probably primordial when it first launched

## VITARA ★★★★★

> Two-tone cross-dresser to rival the Juke, with a handsome body and usefully economical diesel engine. Cabin could do with some work though > **VERDICT:** Rutting Rhinos and pink paint are a thing of the past: it's a serious family car now

## TESLA

## MODEL S ★★★★★

> Embarrassing car makers everywhere who said it can't be done, the staggering electric Model S has near 400-mile range, alluring infotainment and in the P85d, hyperdrive > **VERDICT:** Star Trekking, across the universe, in the Tesla Model S along with Elon Musk...

## TOYOTA

## AYGO ★★★★★

> Bright-looking, stupidly-cramped city car with a characterful three-pot motor is as cheap to run as it feels. See also (ropey) Citroën C1, Pug 108 > **VERDICT:** As 'Up'hill struggles go, battling VW with this is like climbing north face of the Aygo

## YARIS ★★★★★

> Sizeable but soulless, Yaris can't match rivals' dynamics or pocket luxury feel. Clever but costly hybrid version slashes fuel bills and boot space > **VERDICT:** Largely joyless supermini last to be picked for the school football team

## AURIS ★★★★★

> Most Aurises sold are hybrids, mainly 'cos rest of the range is pants and other makers haven't got their hybrid acts together yet > **VERDICT:** Only worth picking as company wheels if you have a Starbucks-like aversion to paying tax

## PRIUS ★★★★★

> Massively practical, thanks to the big cabin and boot, not the think-of-a-number mpg figure. Now available as a plug-in, for a premium > **VERDICT:** The original tofu eater offers as little to the taxman as to the guy behind the wheel

## AVENSIS SALOON/TOURER ★★★★★

> Journeyman company car is like a small oil-field drill: does little well, or at least any better than newer rivals. Tourer marginally more stylish > **VERDICT:** White goods. Also available in light grey, medium grey, dark grey. Not beige, oddly

## VERSO ★★★★★

> Safe, stodgy seven-seater with snore-worthy chassis and a big-selling BMW-sourced 1.6 diesel that feels like half its horses are asleep too > **VERDICT:** Does as little badly as it does well, but easy meat for Ford C-Max or Citroën Picasso

## RAV4 ★★★★★

> Was a soft-roader pioneer back in '94 but has settled for fluffy slippers in its old age. Trump card is boot big enough for a casino table > **VERDICT:** Roomy, reasonable, unremarkable. More dynamic SUVs deserve your dosh

## LAND CRUISER/V8 ★★★★★

> Actually two distinct models but both proper bare-knuckle ladder-frame brawlers that wouldn't know a latte if you spilt it on their riggers' boots > **VERDICT:** Awful, but if we were stranded in the desert we'd trust it over a Range

## GT86 ★★★★★

> Identical to Subaru BRZ but dealers have actually sold more than three. Same delectable handling, shameful dearth of go from unblown 2.0 > **VERDICT:** Sensational to drive, but such hard work only a handful of folk have found out

## VAUXHALL

## ADAM/ADAM ROCKS ★★★★★

> Obese Fiat 500 wannabe with huge options list and comedy naming shtick. Adam S warm hatch worth a thought; Rocks crossover flaccid > **VERDICT:** Revitalised by new 1.0-litre turbo triple. Buy a paper bag and try it

## CORSA ★★★★★

> Made-over Corsa looks like a prime candidate for When Plastic Surgery Goes Bad, but it is more refined and better to drive. 1.0T a good motor > **VERDICT:** Fiesta still cheerfully waving from way out in front. The git

## CORSA VXR ★★★★★

> Luton's granny mugger now a grand cheaper and smoother round the edges. An extra £2.4k gets you a slippery diff and hardcore suspension. Thug life. > **VERDICT:** Honed hoonigan. Fiesta ST keeps its crown, but there's no shame in picking one of these

## ASTRA HATCH/ESTATE ★★★★★

> The girl next door – often unnoticed but actually quite a looker, easily available and with some punchy engines, too. Needs a tidy-up inside > **VERDICT:** Never quite on par with Focus or Golf; new one coming soon

## ASTRA GTC/VXR ★★★★★

> Three-door Astra coupe svelte enough to stand comparison to the Scirocco, makes the Focus look like a lard-arse. VXR fearsomely fast but moody > **VERDICT:** A desirable Vauxhall! If only the inside was as nice as the outside

## CASCADA ★★★★★

> Brave attempt to take on the Audi A5 cabriolet and its ilk. Not a bad car, rather one that's out of time. Good value if you don't mind the image > **VERDICT:** Marty McFly wouldn't. Doc Emmett Brown just might

## INSIGNIA SALOON/TOURER ★★★★★

> Much improved by mid-life facelift, still handsome, spacious and loaded with kit. And then along came the all-new Mondeo and Passat > **VERDICT:** An out-of-date car in a dying sector, latest rivals leaving it behind

## MERIVA ★★★★★

> Suicide is painless, goes the theme tune to M\*A\*S\*H, clearly not referring to tight car parks and the Meriva MPV's back-to-front rear doors > **VERDICT:** Nice idea, but does anyone care about mainstream MPVs anymore?

## ZAFIRA TOURER ★★★★★

> Large MPV with slick seating arrangement and much more spacious than the old bus it replaced. Struggles in the face of S-Max greatness > **VERDICT:** Accomplished but out-flanked by crossovers' rise to dominance

## MOKKA ★★★★★

> Pardon? What? Sorry – you're saying the noisy diesel engine has been replaced? Marvellous. What about the ride and handling? Oh > **VERDICT:** Chunky outside, intricate inside, wearing to drive. Want to like it. Don't

## ANTARA ★★★★★

> Old-fashioned SUV based on the Chevrolet Captiva. Chevrolet has subsequently quit selling cars in the UK altogether. You do the maths > **VERDICT:** Comprehensively outclassed by Kuga etc. Felt dated at launch in 2007

## VXR8 ★★★★★

> Like a fancy can of extra-strength imported lager, this Australian brute looks the part and packs a (577bhp) punch > **VERDICT:** Like that can of lager, it's still essentially quite unpleasant on the inside

## AMPERA ★★★★★

> Futuristic range-extender tech and funky looks, but sales volumes too low to make re-engineering it for Euro 6 emissions worthwhile

> **VERDICT:** Eco car killed by eco regs. We're not even joking. Expiry date September 2015

## VOLKSWAGEN

## UP ★★★★★

> Box on wheels with VW badge is the kind of city car the Japanese have been building for years, except much better quality > **VERDICT:** Hyped as a revolution and hardly that. But a spacious small car with a strong image

## POLO ★★★★★

> Bothered by the Fiesta's Airfix plastics? Buy a Polo instead – brilliant engines, bank-vault build quality and almost as good as the Ford to drive > **VERDICT:** Small capacity turbo petrols are a riot, and increasingly efficient, too

## POLO GTI ★★★★★

> Baby GTI right down to the tartan seats, now with bigger balls. Vastly improved by introduction of manual gearbox. Surprisingly strong value > **VERDICT:** Where's the nearest Byron Burger drive-thru?

## GOLF HATCH/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Squeaky-clean image, quality, refinement and safety put this at the top of the family car class. So it's a swot. And we all know swots are boring > **VERDICT:** The obvious choice. A3 offers extra flash for a bit more cash, Focus better to drive

## GOLF CABRIOLET ★★★★★

> The swot's sexy top-dropping sister promises open-air thrills but remains a sensible homebody at heart. Your parents would approve > **VERDICT:** Or will you always be thinking about the A3 Cabriolet you almost bought?

## GOLF GTD/GTI/R ★★★★★

> GTD is your dad in running shoes. GTI is your dad when he was wild, young and free. R is your dad having a mid-life crisis. All are ace > **VERDICT:** After seven generations, VW has this hot-hatch thing nailed. Buy without regret

## GOLF SV ★★★★★

> The artist formerly known as the Golf Plus. And by 'artist' we mean medium-sized MPV. The car you always knew the Golf would grow up to be > **VERDICT:** Not a bad choice, but now the BMW 2-series Active Tourer is breathing down its neck

## JETTA ★★★★★

> Utterly anonymous and the only VW people will assume is a Skoda. Based on old Golf platform > **VERDICT:** Take a good, long, hard look at yourself. And snap out of it

## BEETLE HATCH/CABRIO ★★★★★

> Although better to drive it lacks the design purity of its predecessor and the charm of the original. Unusually indulgent, by VW's standards > **VERDICT:** Even wannabe retro hipsters are, like, so totally over this cynical marketing exercise, man

## EOS ★★★★★

> Folding hardtop cabrio produced since 2006. Should be collecting its pension > **VERDICT:** Buy a Golf Cabrio

## SCIROCCO ★★★★★

> Old Golf in a slinky dress. Scrubs up well. Fun, friendly, and far more generous in the back-seat department than the Audi TT > **VERDICT:** Ballistic R version definitely worthy; low-power diesel not so much

## PASSAT SALOON/ESTATE ★★★★★

> Interior design and refinement so good it shames some limos, cutting-edge kit and elegant looks. If only it wasn't so dull to drive > **VERDICT:** Mega mile-muncher for the undemanding pilot. Aesthete to Mondeo's athlete

## CC ★★★★★

> Previous Passat on a night out – but we aren't talking clubbing and a kebab. Dangerously close to being genuinely sexy, even if it is a CLS knock-off > **VERDICT:** Like all the best knock-offs, it's almost as good and much cheaper

## PHAETON ★★★★★

> Aka VW's folly. The luxury car for people who don't want to be seen owning a luxury car. Which is how many people? Exactly > **VERDICT:** Once a mighty feat of engineering over good sense. Now old, outclassed and irrelevant

## TOURAN ★★★★★

> This is not just a van-like people carrier. This is a Volkswagen van-like people carrier. Doesn't go camping unless there's a yurt involved > **VERDICT:** Only buy if you definitely don't want any more kids. C-Max so much better

## SHARAN ★★★★★

> Large seven-seater sliding-door people carrier. Nice enough but made to look silly by the all-but-identical and significantly cheaper Seat Alhambra > **VERDICT:** Get the same car from Seat for less. Or try the Ford Galaxy

## TIGUAN ★★★★★

> Superbly well-engineered and essentially undemanding compact SUV. Anonymous in a reassuring kind of way. Big seller, for good reason > **VERDICT:** Like a Golf on stilts, it does the job – and very well

## TOUAREG ★★★★★

> The people's Porsche Cayenne. Do the people still want their own Cayenne? Well, it is nearly £10k cheaper... > **VERDICT:** Big, comfy, competent SUV with unpretentious badge. Great on and off road

## VOLVO

## V40 ★★★★★

> Smart Swedish effort in a sector dominated by Germans works to a point, with efficient D4 engine and impressive equipment. But it's a bit bloated in seat, suspension and steering feel > **VERDICT:** Sitting uncomfortably between Golf and A3. A rock and hard place

## S60 ★★★★★

> A sporting saloon that, well, just isn't thanks to steering that seems to be bored with driving. Serious identity crisis ensues, although R Design models look smart enough > **VERDICT:** Volvo gambled on a 3-series rival and lost

## V60 ★★★★★

> A Frenchman who can't cook. A Jackson who can't dance. A Volvo estate which can't carry much. No such things against the very nature of being exist, do they? > **VERDICT:** Handsome, safe, efficient estate hamstrung by one issue...

## V70 ★★★★★

> Make every V60 designer live in the boot of a V70 until they understand Volvo estates. Ageing, slow, and now diesel only, but as comfy as a rest home > **VERDICT:** Please Volvo, never veer from this template, not for fashion or economy

## S80 ★★★★★

> Numb steering, wafy ride, feeling you should have bought a 5-series, decent, strong diesel engines > **VERDICT:** The S80 is like carpet slippers: it does pottering about well, but is ill-suited to anything else

## XC60 ★★★★★

> Space, sharp looks, competitive pricing, family safety and a wipe-clean cabin. Only grumbles are grumbly D5 diesel engine and high CO2 > **VERDICT:** Volvo really is good at SUVs. XC60 hard to beat, even by much newer competitors

## XC70 ★★★★★

> A V70 in breeches, with raised ride height and 4x4 option. Awd starts at less than 40 grand, which is good value if you find SUVs cross > **VERDICT:** If you don't like having a dozen brace of shot pheasant in your boot, don't buy one

## XC90 ★★★★★

> It was worth the (long) wait: luxurious seven-seat interior, a smorgasbord of clever safety tech, efficient four-cylinder and plug-in drivetrains, and refined drive > **VERDICT:** The handsome new XC90 is one of the most complete cars on sale at any price

## ZENOS

## E10/E10S ★★★★★

> Flyweight track car with aluminium backbone chassis and carbonfibre recycled from fighter jets, created by ex-Caterham brains trust > **VERDICT:** Glorious handling, ferocious speed from Ecoboost turbo S – a bright future beckons





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T55 ABE	R23 ANS	S19 CAN	R21 DEC	B7 ESW	IRZ 2804	R25 JRP	MAZ 2799	NZ2 NET	R21 BJB	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	M500 JCH	LR04 LEW	NFZ 565	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 696
R21 ABE	K888 ANG	R25 CAN	R25 ESW	R27 EVA	CO04 JAB	R25 JRP	MAZ 2799	K18 NEV	R21 ACC	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 ACC	R21 APB	R21 CAP	R21 DEK	R23 EVA	Y700 JAD	R25 JRP	MAZ 2799	NH2 NEV	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
W77 ACH	R21 APW	OX04 CAR	R24 DER	OX04 EYE	R21 JAL	R321 JSB	Y333 MCD	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R25 ACK	R21 ARA	CAS 931A	EA05 DES	R321 EVS	V55 JAT	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
P333 ACM	R21 ARB	OX06 CAT	PH0 DES	Y31 FAE	Y31 FAE	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 ACS	R21 ARC	Y33 CAW	OX02 DEW	T3 FAG	D41 JAX	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 ACW	R21 ARD	Y33 CAW	OX02 DEW	T3 FAG	D41 JAX	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
L666 ACY	A7 ARE	OX2 ABE	R27 292	Y4 JBB	Y4 JBB	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 ADC	R21 ARG	R21 CCC	DIG 7857	F1G 318	R23 JBS	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
ADH 42T	R23 ARK	R25 CER	R21 DJA	F1G 318	R23 JBS	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
TM05 ADM	R21 ARL	R25 CER	R21 DJD	F1G 318	R23 JBS	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 ADP	R21 ARM	C2Z 575	R21 DJT	F1G 318	R23 JBS	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 ADW	E10 ARN	CFZ 272	D1Z 522	N555 FRY	R21 JCH	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
N11 AFB	R21 ARP	Y14 CHA	V333 DMH	FRZ 212	R25 JSC	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
P11 AFB	R21 ARP	Y14 CHA	V333 DMH	FRZ 212	R25 JSC	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
N77 AGH	OX02 ASA	R21 CHR	R21 DMH	R21 GAB	R21 JCH	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 AGS	R23 ASB	CIL 880	R21 DMH	R21 GAB	R21 JCH	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R31 AGS	R23 ASB	CIL 880	R21 DMH	R21 GAB	R21 JCH	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
S30 AGW	R23 ASH	CIL 880	R21 DMH	R21 GAB	R21 JCH	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
AH2 383	S5 ASN	L2 CVH	Y444 D08	G82 595	R23 JCH	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 ADJ	P88 BAB	R23 CLB	DA02 DON	G2Z 454	R23 JCH	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
Y321 ADJ	R27 BAL	R23 CLD	OX04 DON	R21 GED	V40 JDR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 AUG	R23 BAM	CLZ 313	R21 DRB	Y28 GEF	R21 JDR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 AUL	Y222 BAR	R21 CMH	R21 DRC	S400 GER	OX02 JEF	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
MT77 AJL	R21 BAS	R24 CMS	S11 DRH	GFZ 1500	OX02 JEF	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 AJN	R28 BAS	R27 CMW	R21 DRH	G16 800	OX02 JEF	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R321 AJP	R24 BED	D7 CNE	R21 DRS	G16 800	OX02 JEF	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R321 AJT	W333 BEK	H5 CNE	R24 DRW	G16 800	OX02 JEF	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
OW07 AJW	W333 BEK	H5 CNE	R24 DRW	G16 800	OX02 JEF	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
L33 AKB	AH54 BEN	R25 COS	K5 DSG	Y222 GUS	GKZ 8371	Y17 JAB	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
G16 ALK	R21 BES	HM05 COT	K5 DSG	Y222 GUS	GKZ 8371	Y17 JAB	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R25 ALD	G18 BET	Y2 CPO	V26 DUG	R21 HAB	JH2 676	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 ALE	R25 BET	W25 CRS	R21 DUN	F555 HAD	JH2 676	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R31 ALH	G589 BEN	K5 CUE	E4Z 787	R24 HAM	JH2 676	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 ALL	R21 BFC	K3 CUP	R21 EDS	HM08 HAN	R321 JIB	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R25 ALP	B16 A514	R24 DAD	R321 EDY	R25 HAS	R23 JJC	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
Y77 AMD	R21 BJH	R23 DAG	R25 EJS	HM08 HAN	R321 JIB	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 AME	R25 BJW	Y13 DAI	R25 EJS	HM08 HAN	R321 JIB	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
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R21 AMH	J2 BPR	OX02 DAN	R26 ELE	HM08 HAN	R321 JIB	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R21 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
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R23 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
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R23 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PMR	R21 SEW	UEZ 939
R23 AMW	R25 BRU	ME06 DAN	Y321 ELL	H1G 704	V333 JMR	R25 JSC	Y321 MCK	NH2 454	R21 ACP	OT04 DJS	GJZ 976	OT04 DJS	LR04 LEW	NFZ 191	T39 PM		









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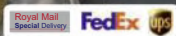
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# The car Top 10.

## Forgotten Fords

The Fiesta is Britain's best-seller and is just about to turn 40. This lot, quite rightly, aren't so memorable. By **Chris Chilton**

**1 MAVERICK**  
 Long before the Kuga, when we were all still accepting of interior plastics that could blunt a diamond-tipped drill and handling vaguer than a schedule for Christ's comeback tour, Ford of Europe's maverick idea was to slap an oval on the Nissan Terrano II. Then it twinned Maverick Mk2 with Mazda's Tribute. Bjorn again, you might say.



**2 PROBE**  
 Handsome beast; hideous badge. This forgotten Ford coupe, the first offered to Brits since the Capri's demise seven years earlier, was a cousin to Mazda's sleek MX-6 and even came with a zingy 2.5-litre Japanese V6. Rare now, and if you want one over a Corrado VR6, make sure you ask your carer for permission.



**3 COUGAR**  
 Probe's US-built Mondeo-based replacement an early example of Ford's New Edge design. Advertised with the help of Dennis 'Easy Money' Hopper. After ranking it virtually last in a 1998 group test, CAR gave one away. Which is more than Ford dealers seemed able to do. Died, unloved, after four years.



**4 CONSUL CAPRI**  
 Predating the 'real' Capri, this typically stymied European take on late '50s fins-and-chrome America could spin heads, but not its wheels, thanks to an engine around one quarter the size of those offered in its Stateside inspirations. Resulting 22.6sec 0-60mph time measured by calendar.



**5 MERCURY CAPRI**  
 Ford America's mildly posh Mercury division sold various Capris over the years, including our actual Capri, a rebadged Mustang, and this Australian-built front-drive ragtop. An affordable sports car available in right-hand drive, but not in the UK? We should have felt slighted, but the MX-5 put paid to that.



**6 EXPLORER**  
 Feeling that Ford's UK buyers had missed out on the US fireball Pinto fiasco 20 years earlier, British Ford dealers were delighted to briefly secure right-hand drive Explorers in the late 1990s to coincide with a spate of rollover fatalities in the US linked to the SUVs' delaminating tyres.



**7 ESCORT XR3i**  
 Okay, so it's hardly forgotten, but given that it looked good, handled better (on smooth roads, at least), wore some incredibly cool rims and Ford shifted faaahsands of the things, the XR3i's Stalin-esque airbrushing from hot-hatch history to make room for yet more Golf GTI stories seems a little unfair.



**8 ORION**  
 And while we're at it, spare a thought for the booted Escort. A top-ten regular in the UK sales charts, it found over 3m homes in 10 years, but little trace of its existence remains. Apart from an old issue of CAR in which we compared the wood 'n' leather 1600E to an Allegro Vanden Plas.



**FIVE HUNDRED**  
 Trying to reskin an old Volvo platform in new clothes was a tough gig, on top of which Ford spent too much time worrying about the big German brands. The result looked like a bad Chinese Passat knock-off and sales tanked. But with only a facelift and a badge swap to Taurus, demand for the 'new' Five Hundred picked up again. Go figure, as the Yanks would say.

**10 EXP**  
 US Ford's ill-judged front-drive rival to Honda's CRX was supposed to evoke memories of the original Thunderbird. But with a pair of CCTV monitors for headlamps it looks more Joe 90 to us. And it didn't just look ugly: a wheezing 70bhp CVH motor made this torpid two-seater sound objectionable too.





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